the gods lie.

kaori ozaki

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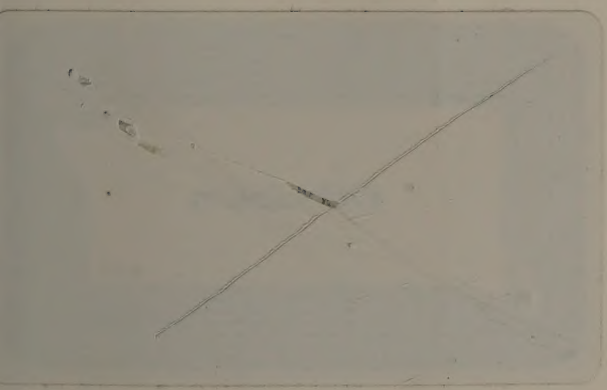

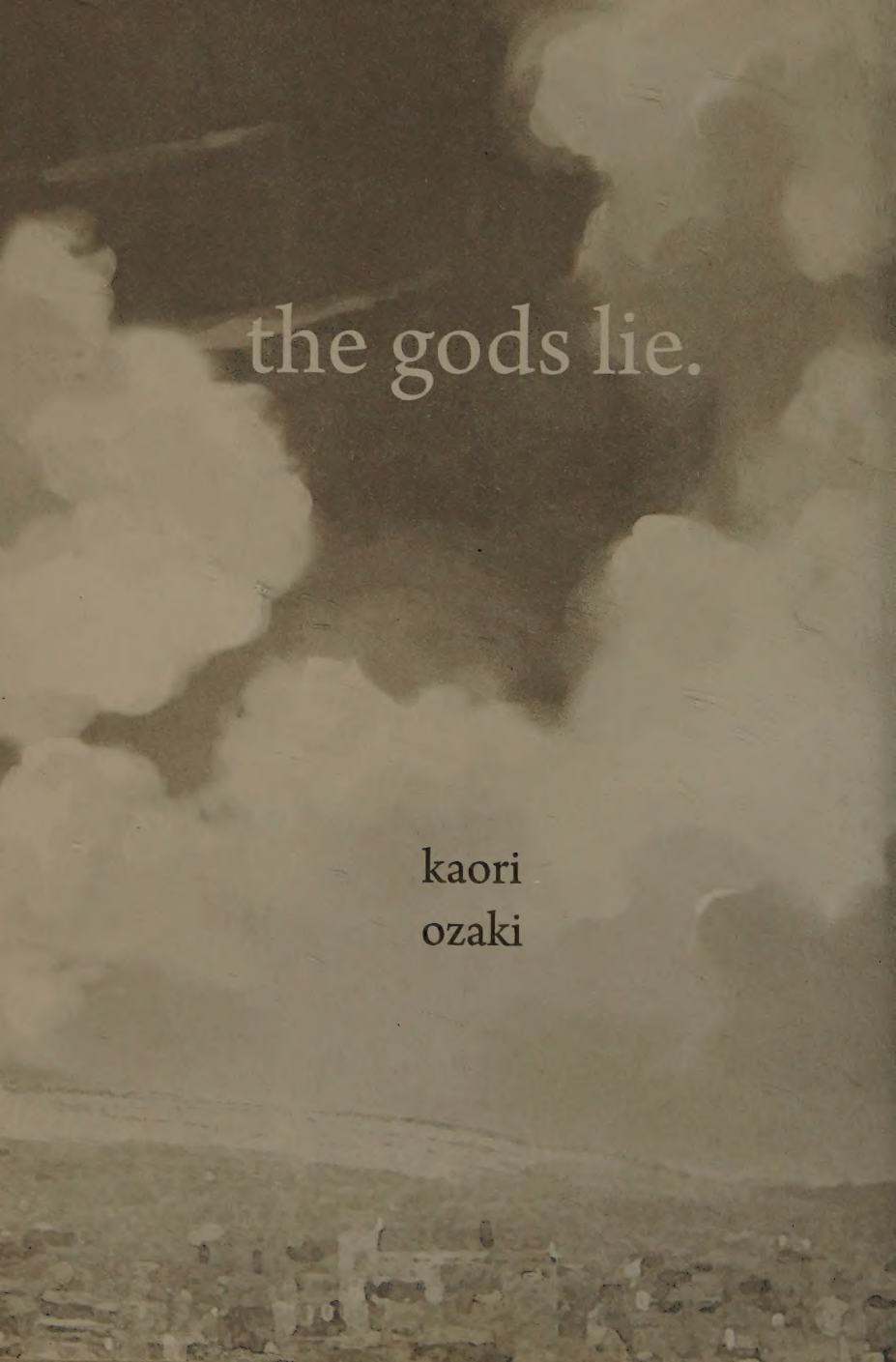
the gods lie.
kaori
ozaki

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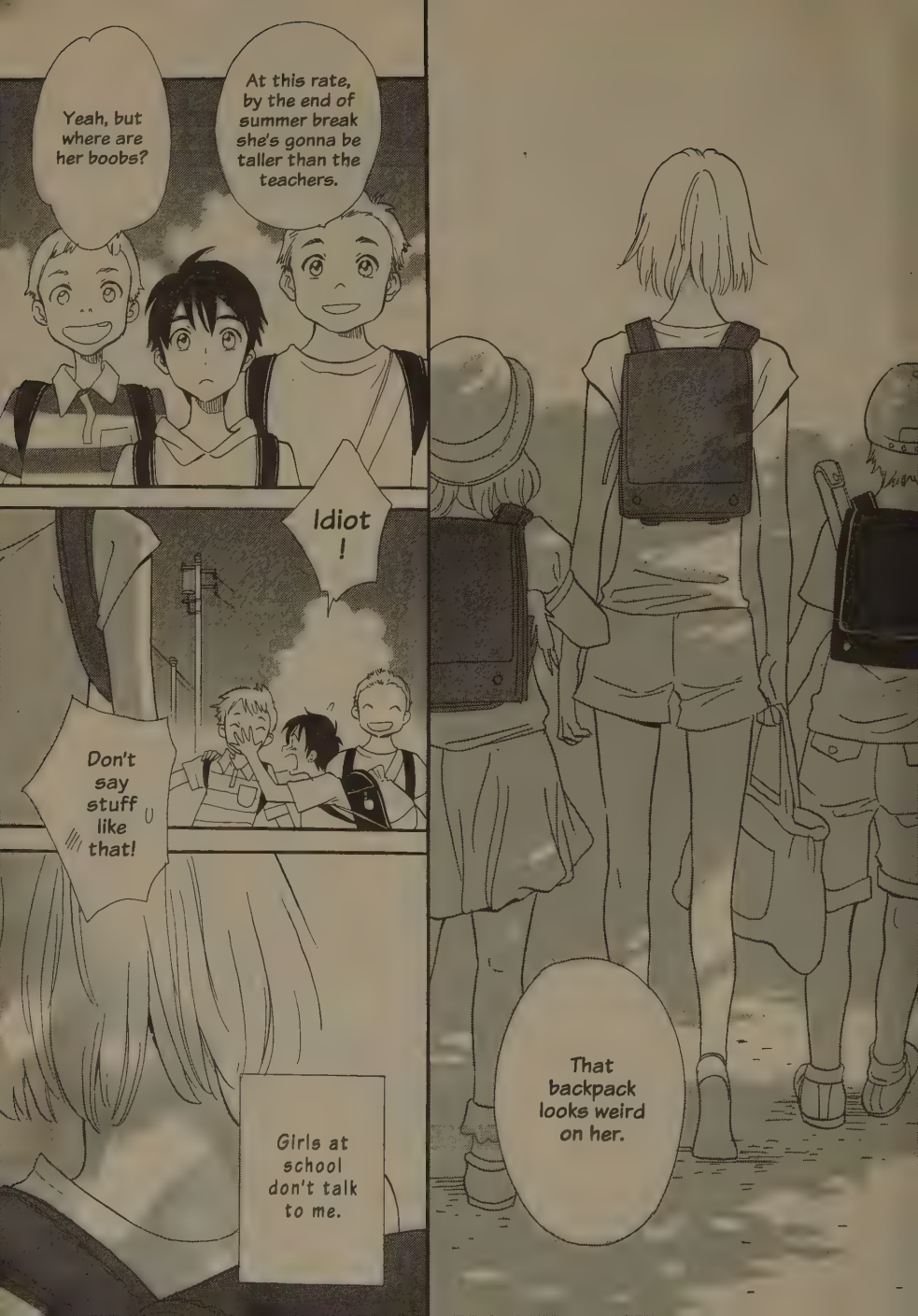
chapter 1

It was the summer when I was 11.
ZZZ

...
The curtains...

Huh?
They had the curtains washed
before summer vacation...
SNIFF
SNIFF

Natsuru!
I'm done. Let's go to practice!
Oh!
Sure!
It'd been a while
Suzumura, huh...
since a girl talked to me.


Yeah, but where are her boobs?
At this rate, by the end of summer break she's gonna be taller than the teachers.
Idiot!
Don't say stuff like that!
Girls at school don't talk to me.
That backpack looks weird on her.

I transferred to this school at the beginning of the year.
NATSURU NANAO
My name is Natsuru Nanao. I'm from Tokyo.
I like playing soccer, and, uhm...
WHISPER ひそひそ
WHISPER ひそひそ
And then...
Hey, Nanao...
THURS FEBRUARY

* "Hime" means "princess," hence her nickname

The Princess was turned down!
...
Rejected!
!!
C'mon, Yo, let's go to practice !!
I don't want any!
HMPH!
Whatever.
I can get by just fine without talking to girls.
...
And ever since...

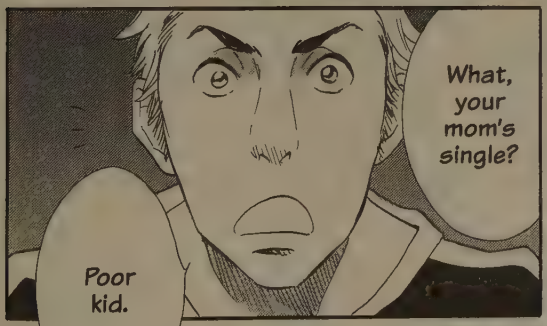
'cause I've got soccer!
Right?
Boys, let me introduce you
to your new coach...
Maruo Sakai !!
Okay, kids, get pumped for a great summer of soccer!
WHPP
ビリリ

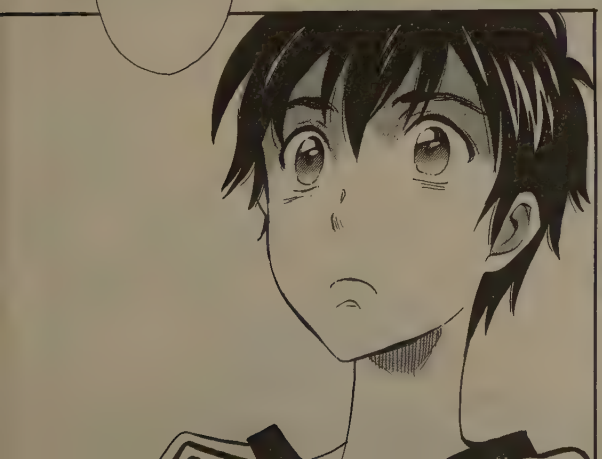
Huh?
Why's there a new coach all of a sudden?
What happened to Coach Okada?
Mr. Okada was just volunteering because he's with the neighborhood association ...
But Coach Sakai has a JFA license.
Lucky for you!

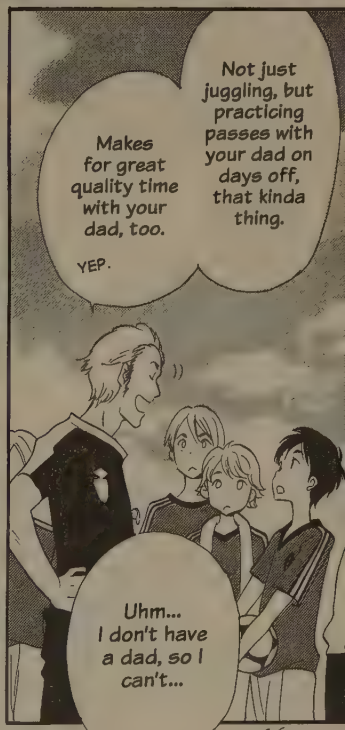
Nice shot, Natsuru!
No, no. That's not gonna work.
THMP
Throw it to the right!
You gotta look around you.
When you're surrounded by defense like that, the smart thing to do is pass.
Number 10 was right there!
Don't just dribble through like a fool.
Get it to the other side!
Faster! Move it!

はあ HUFF
はあ HUFF

Hmm, I think I see what level you guys are at.
If you really want to get better, you gotta practice on your own time, too!

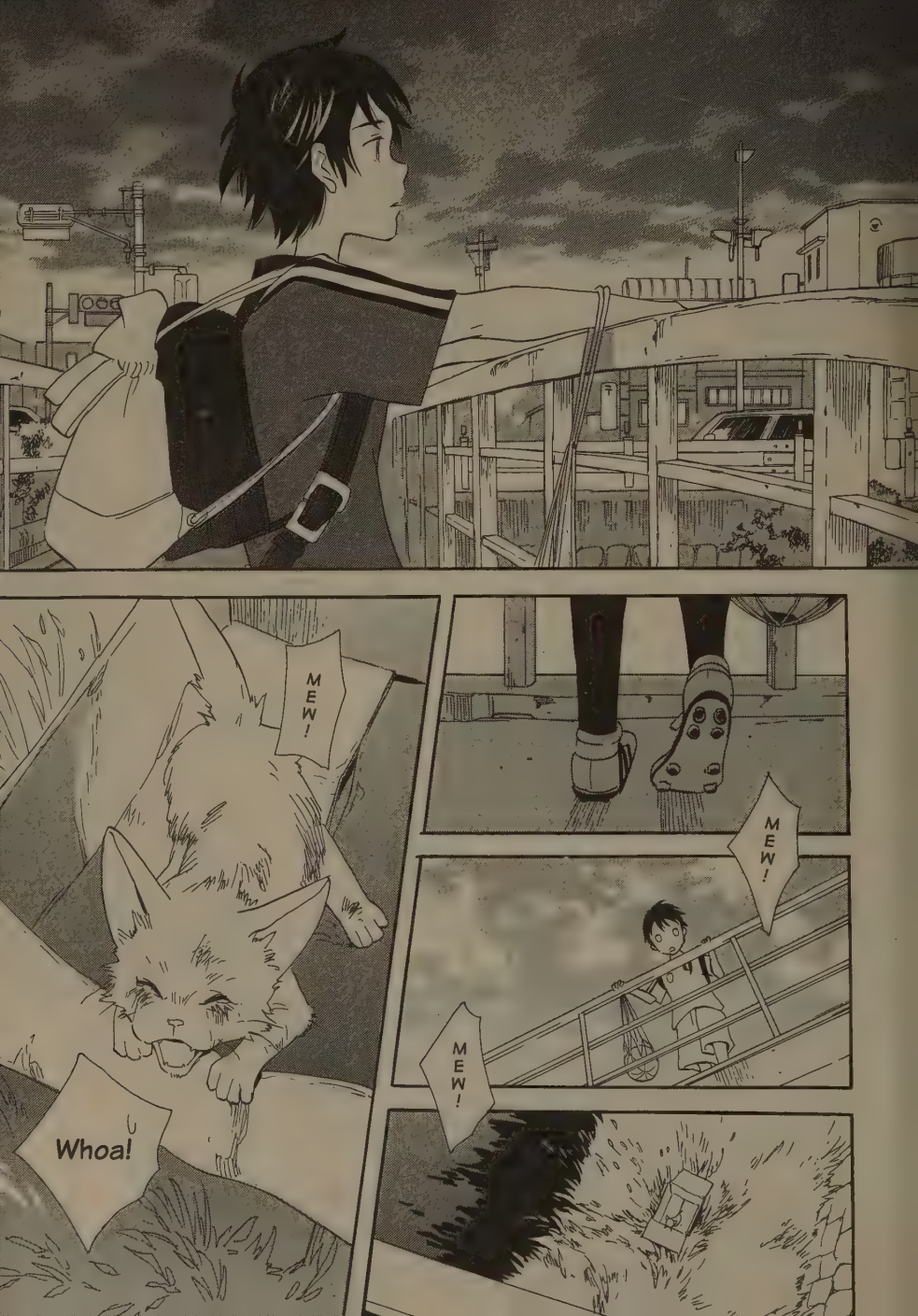

What, your mom's single?
Poor kid.




Not just juggling, but practicing passes with your dad on days off, that kinda thing.
Makes for great quality time with your dad, too.
YEP.
Uhm... I don't have a dad, so I can't...

He pisses me off!
The hell is that coach's problem!
He runs pretty hot, huh...
PUNT
I like Mr. Okada better...
SWISH
Even if he wasn't any good at soccer...
Now, this is a volley kick...

By the way, my mom told me
Mr. Okada is at Aizawa Hospital.
He's got cancer.
See you!


MEW!
MEW!
MEW!
Whoa!

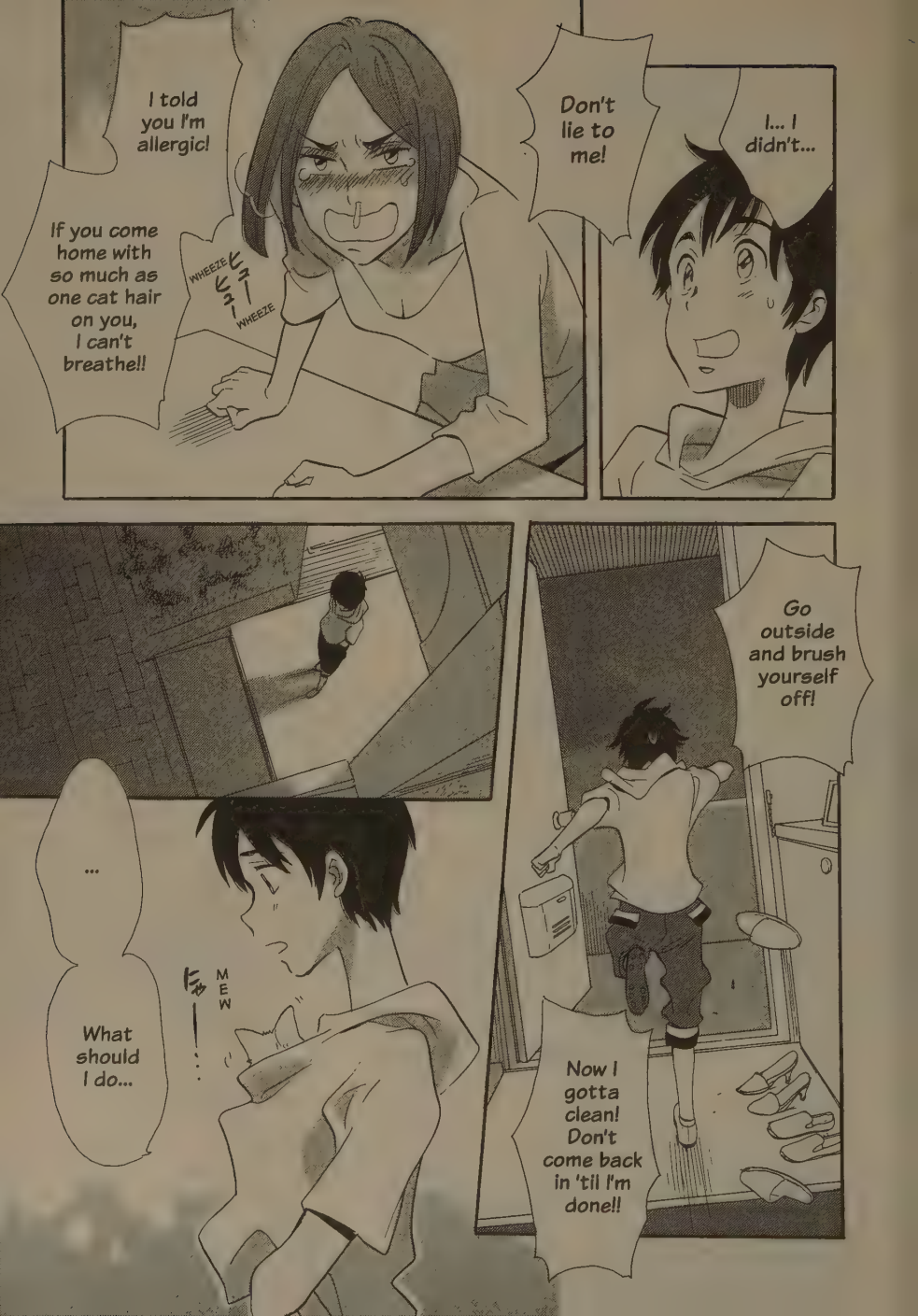
Listen,
you gotta shush up.
I'll go convince Ritsuko to let me keep you...
And don't poop in there.
MEW!

Hey there, Nats...
I couldn't write a single page today... again...
Sorry. Mind if we get delivery for dinner?
S...
Sure.
PEEK
Writer's block, still?
Yeeaah...
The editor wants me to finish *two* volumes this month!
Because of the stupid O-Bon holiday!
SNURRF
Please either slurp your ramen or sniffle, not both.

Hey, Rits,
we got a new soccer coach today.
They said Mr. Okada is in the hospital with cancer.
What?!
People die from cancer, don't they?
Is Mr. Okada gonna die?
He...
He will not!! Don't say stuff like that!!
But Dad died...
Okay, sometimes people die...
SLURP
Your dad just had bad luck.
KLATTER
All done!

...
Uhm...
SNIFFLE
くすんくすん
But it's so relaxing.
ふにふに
MMMMM
...
Could you stop kneading my boobs?
SQUEEZE
ふに
SQUEEZE
ふに
SQUEEZE
ふに
It's gonna be okay, Nats.

ACH OOO!
Oh, so ...
I wanted to ask you if we could...
We'll go visit Mr. Okada sometime.
Yeah.
ACHOO !!
CHOO !!
What is...
It won't sto...
-PCHOO!
ドキ
BA
DUM
N... Natsuru!
You pet a cat didn't you!


I told you I'm allergic!
If you come home with so much as one cat hair on you, I can't breathe!!
WHEEZE
ヒュー
ヒュー
WHEEZE
Don't lie to me!
I... I didn't...
Go outside and brush yourself off!
Now I gotta clean! Don't come back in 'til I'm done!!
...
What should I do...
MEW
ニャー!

Suzumura ...
What're you doing out here
at this hour...?

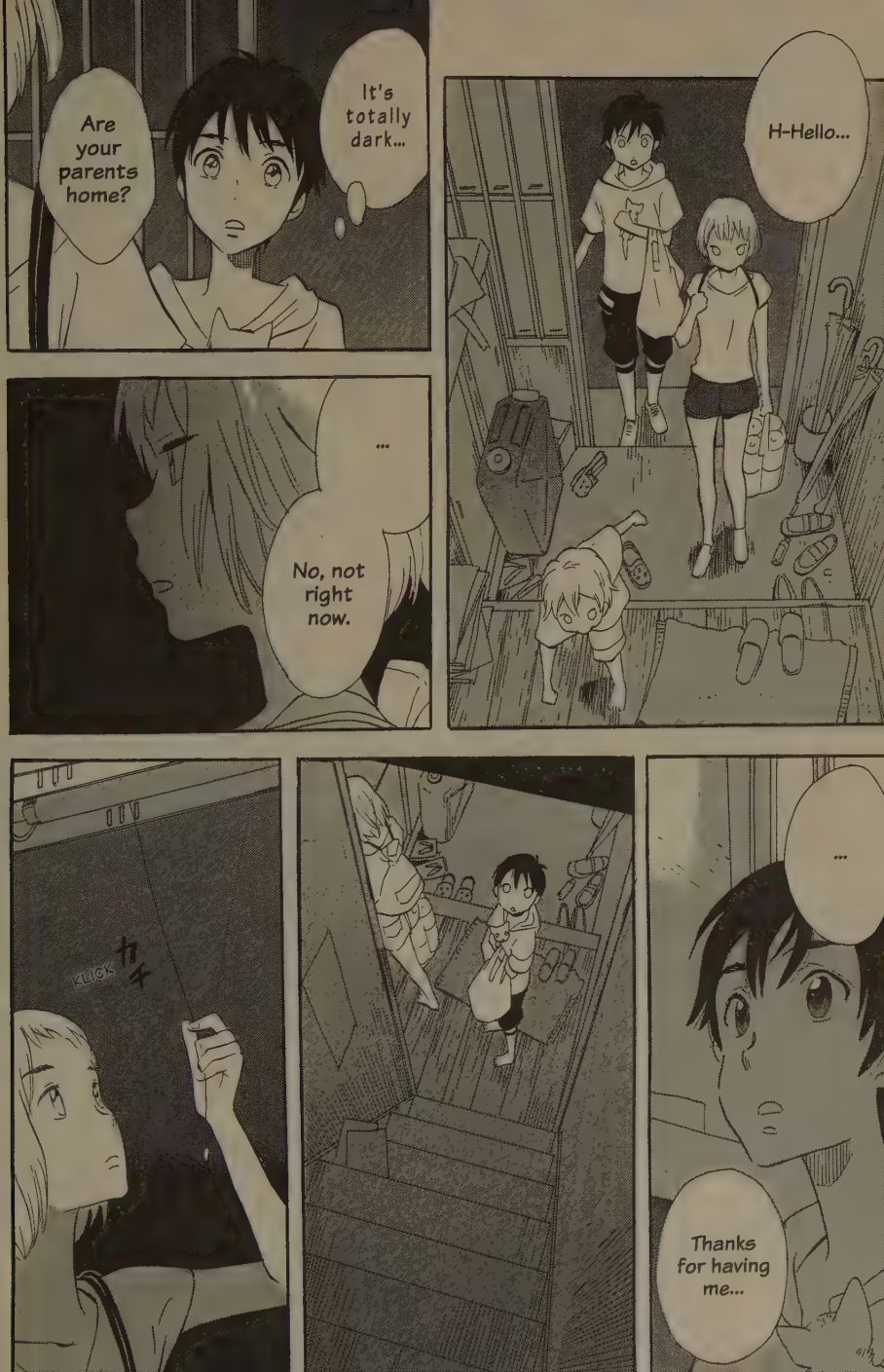
Are you allergic or anything?
Oh, hey, could you take this cat home?
My place is right here.
What about you, Nanao...?
Wow! Kitty!!
We can take care of it...
...
Yuuta!

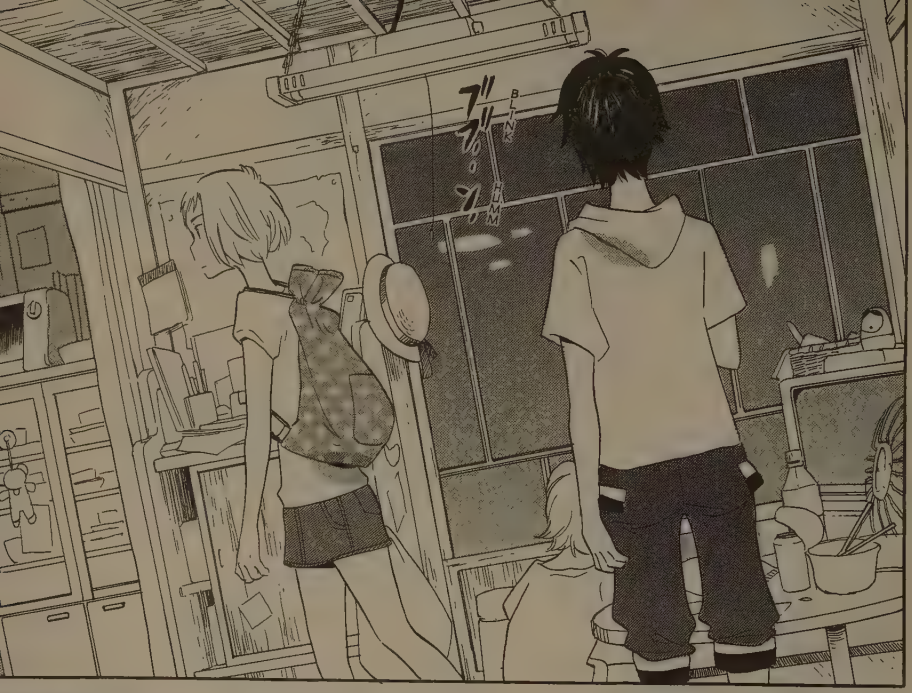
MEW...
Huh ?!
That's my whole allowance ...
1,000 yen a month.
if you pay for room and board.
O-Okay.
I'll bring the cash to school tomorrow.
Can you ask your parents if it's okay?
...
I have to get some groceries first.
Come with us. And bring the cat.
TSUMOTO STATION

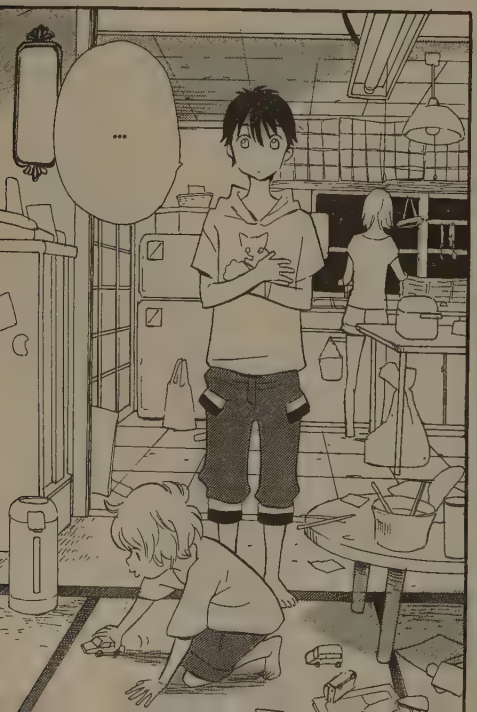
Hello, Mr. Tree!
Hello, Mrs. Telephone Pole!!
Hello, Mr. Post-box!!
I have to say hi to all the things today!
Sis, wait!
Don't worry about him.
He's incapable of walking in a straight line...
Hello, Mrs. wall!
Your brother?
WILL DELIVER

SPARKLERS
No, Yuuta.
Don't pick up things we don't need.
198 yen...
248 yen...
She's so serious...
You got a ton of stuff.
...
They had a special sale today...
Want me to carry a bag?
I-I'm fine...

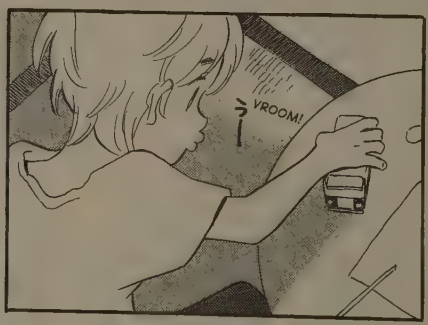
GRAB
Ah.
I've got it.
Is your house this way?
Yeah...

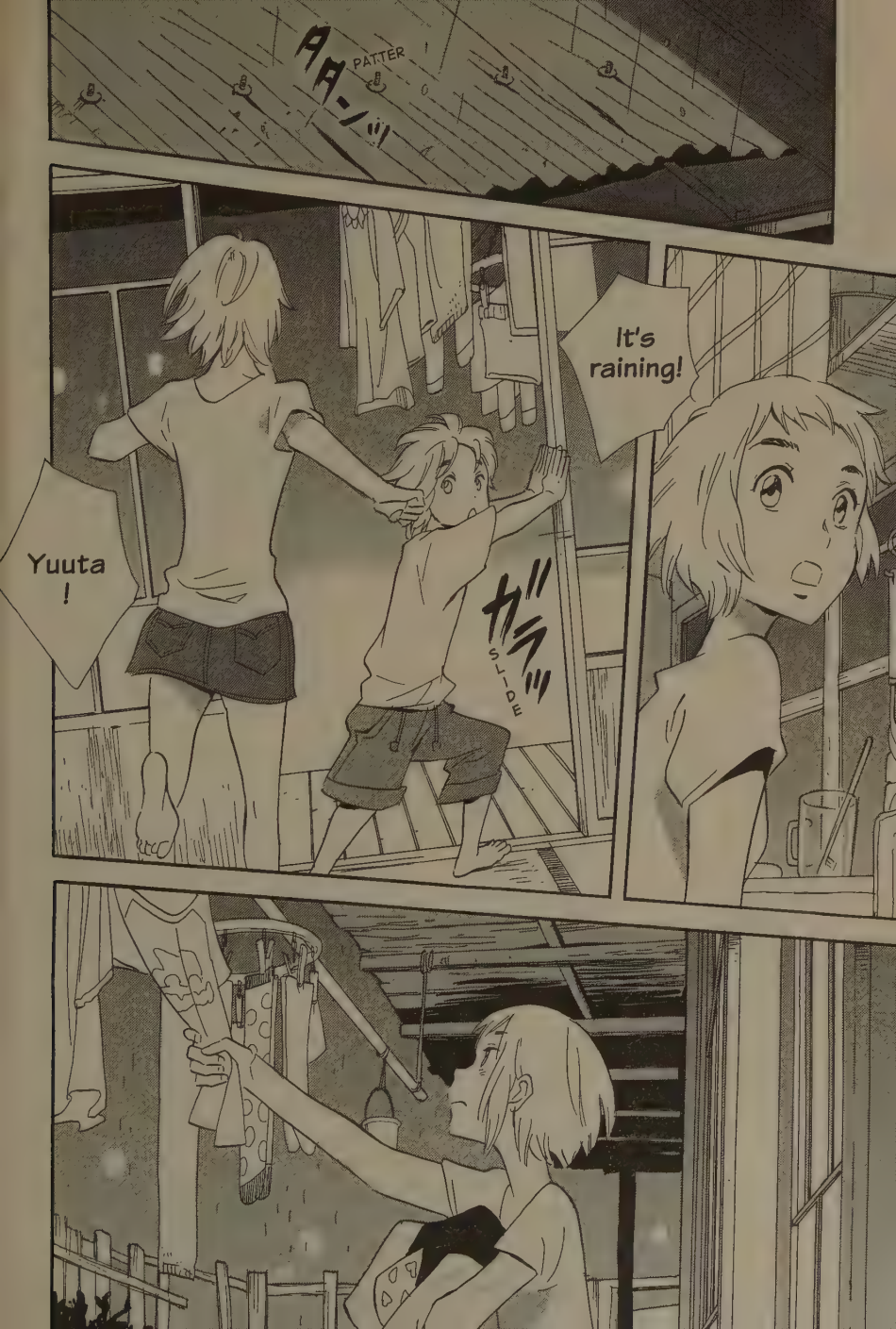

It's totally dark...
Are your parents home?
H-Hello...
...
No, not right now.
CLICK カチ
...
Thanks for having me...


BLEE
ブリー
HUM


...

RUSTLE
ガサガサ


VROOM!
ラー


PATTER
It's raining!
Yuuta !
SLIDE

Waah!
What's wrong?
N...
Nothing ...

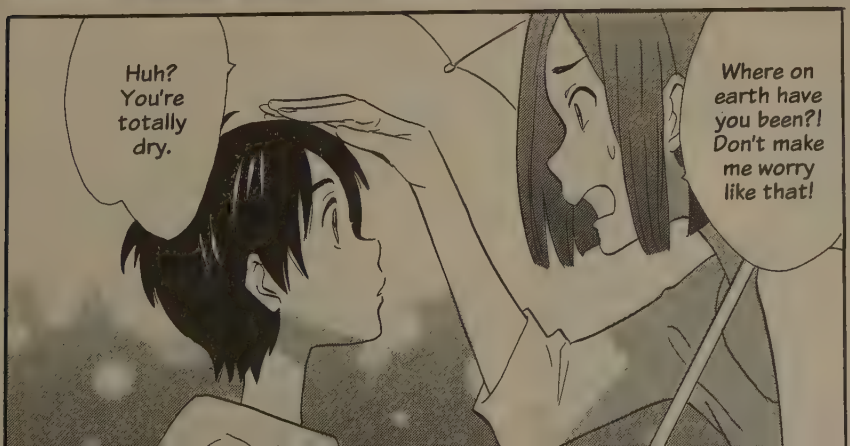
Don't go that way.
There's a ghost.
Hey, what's the kitty's name?!
Huh?
Okay, your name's Tofu!
Uh... I didn't name her yet.
You can pick one.

Hey,
uhm...
...
Why Tofu?!
'cause she's all white!
Can I pet her?

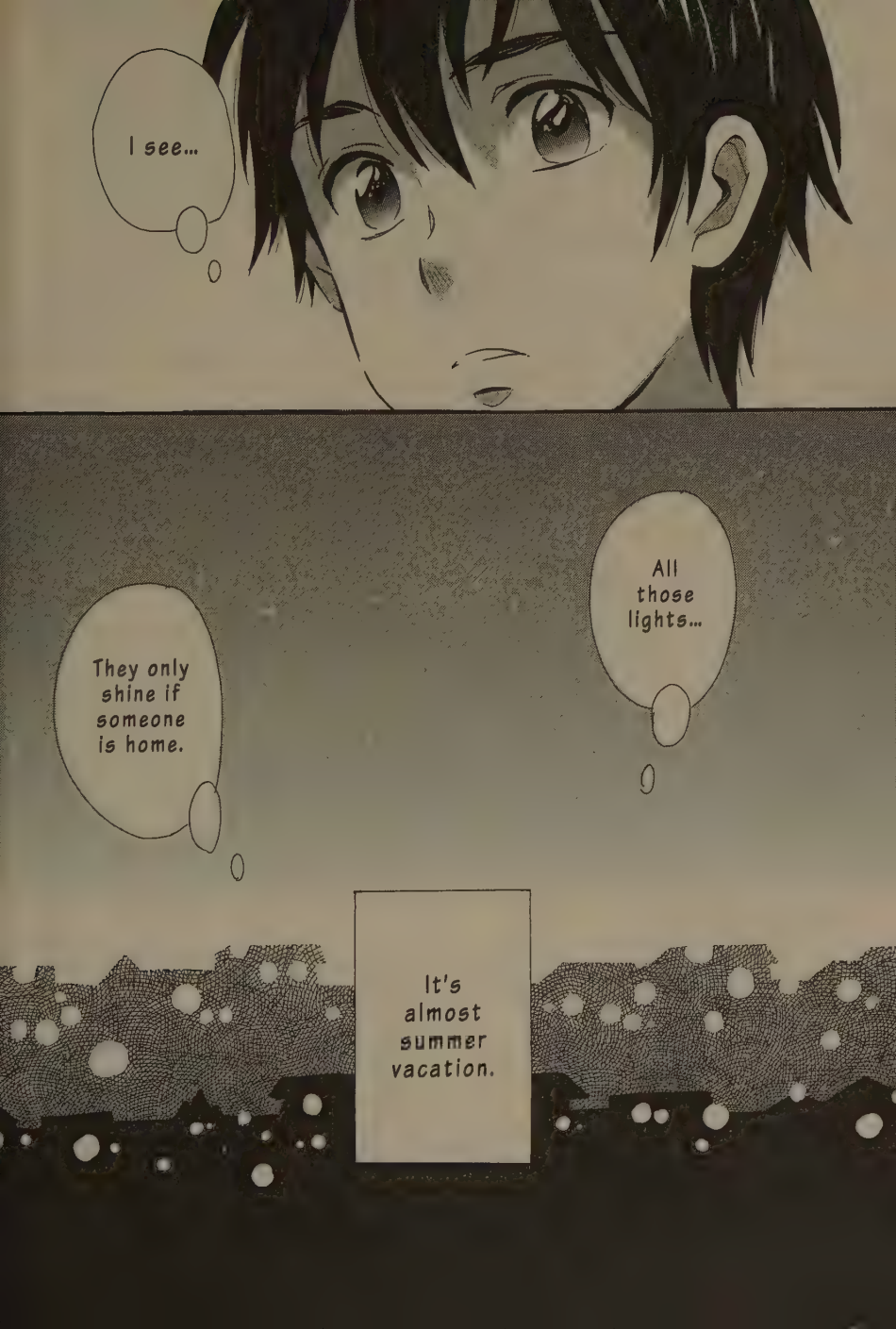
Aww...!
...
She's smiling...
It's okay...
We won't abandon you.
Are you sure, Suzumura?
Don't you have to talk it over with your...
No. It's fine.

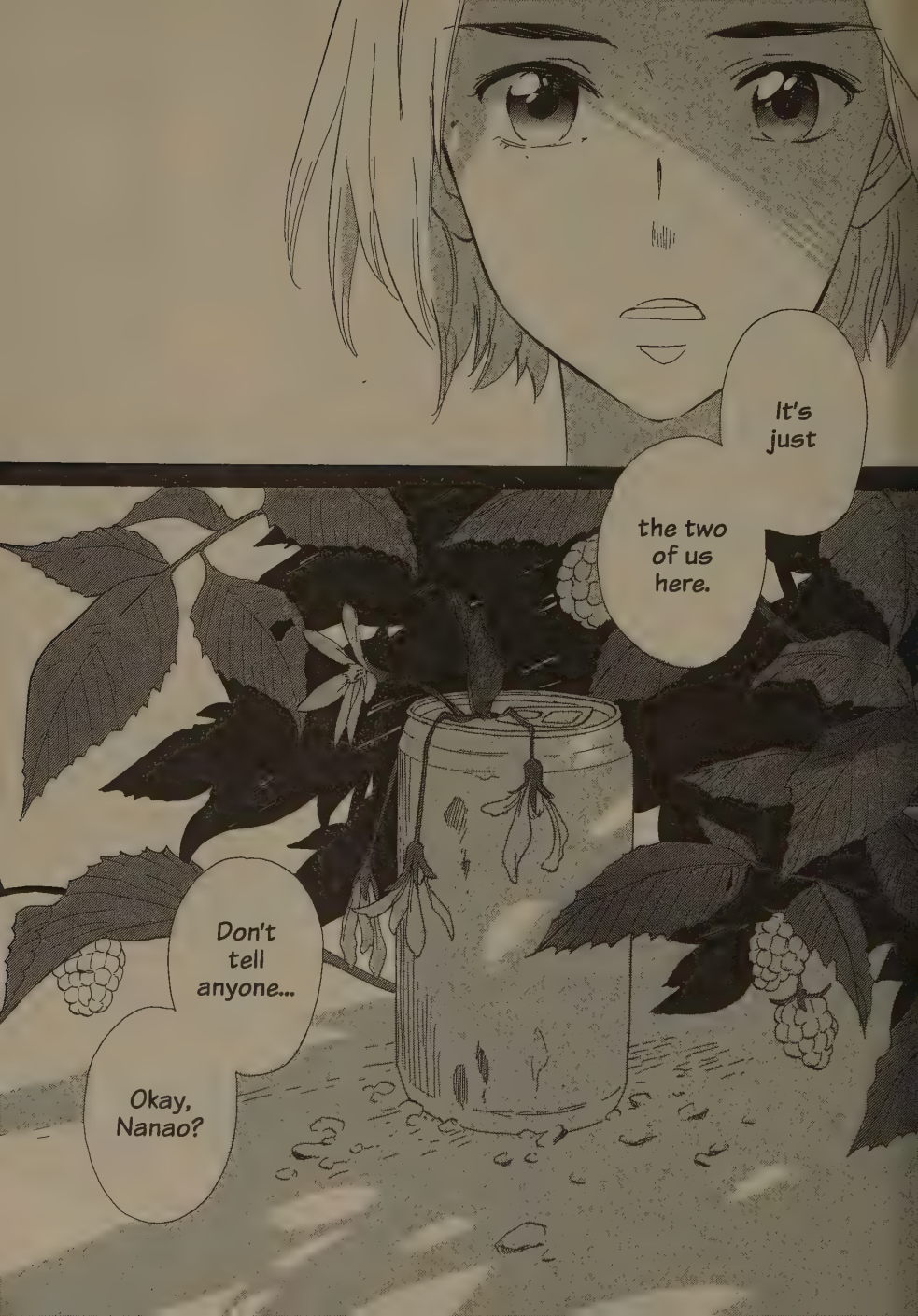
Don't tell anyone ...
Okay, Nanao?
It's just
the two of us here...

Natsuru !!
TRUDGE
とぼ
とぼ
TRUDGE


Huh? You're totally dry.
Where on earth have you been?! Don't make me worry like that!

...
Hey...
Eh heh heh.
ACHOO!
Not you, Rits.
What?
No, of course not!
I wonder if there's a whole lot of grade school kids living by themselves.
That's not really the issue...
Is that the only thing you'd worry about if I was gone?
Yeah...
What would they do for parents' day at school?


I see...
All those lights...
They only shine if someone is home.
It's almost summer vacation.


It's just
the two of us here.
Don't tell anyone...
Okay, Nanao?

chapter 2

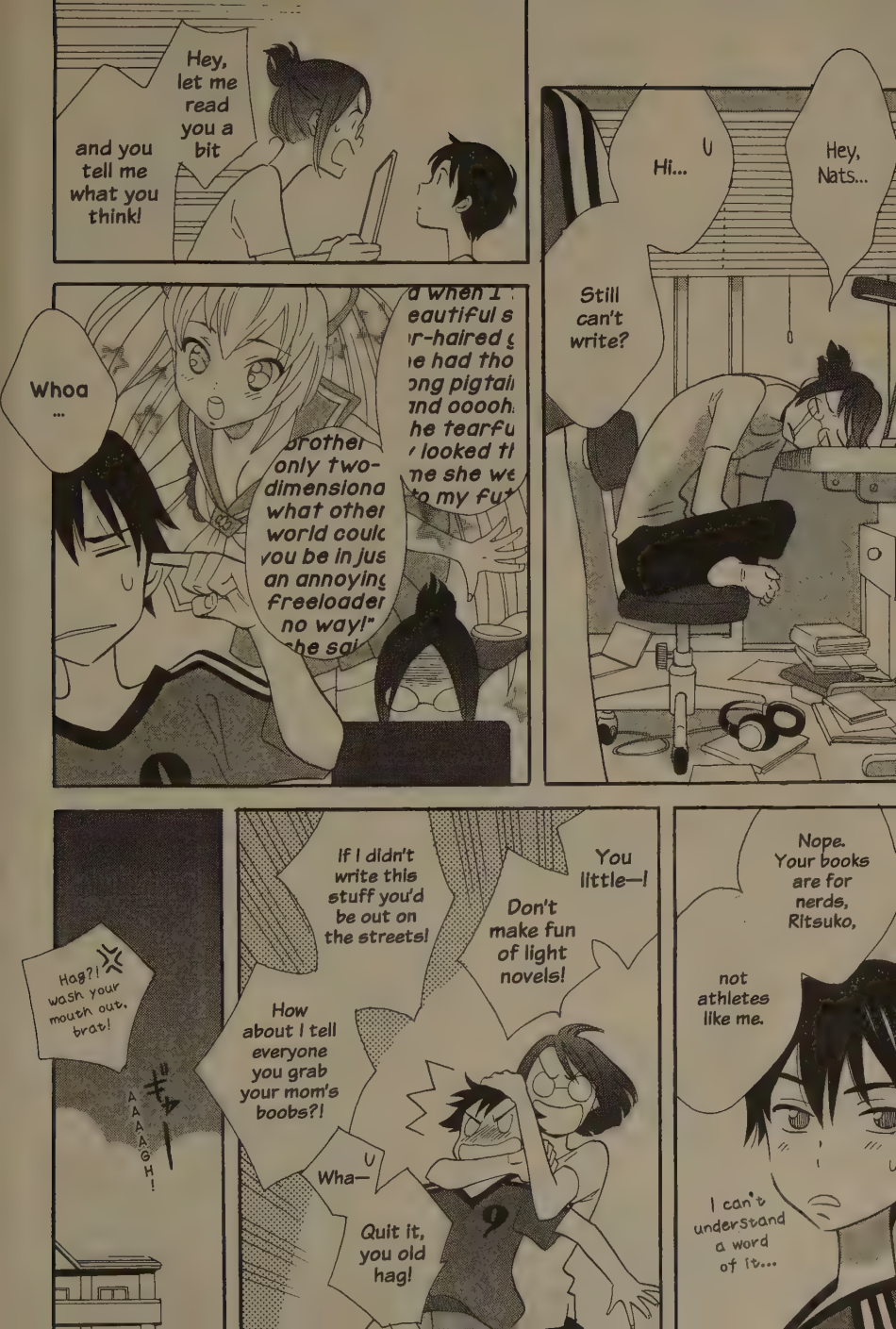
Make your turns tighter!
Once you're done, go do some sprints!
I played soccer over summer vacation, too.
It's too soon for you to be tired out, Nanao!

?
March...
What month were you born?
You've got technique, but no stamina at all.
And you're pretty small for a sixth grader.
An early birthday ends up being a disadvantage in sports, y'know.
Ah... Yeah, too early in the year.
Poor kid.

SLAM
TMP
TMP
Hey, Nanao!
Get back here!!
H...

There he is, the bad boy striker!
Aw, chill out.
Here, my treat!
You're the one spending your money on junk food. And in your jersey.
Don't worry about it too much.
You're good enough to get into the prefectural training center.
Hmm...
MREEEN
ミーーン
MREEEN
...
I just hope Coach Okada gets out of the hospital soon...
...

Hey, Yo,
I would— if you were in La Liga, which team would you wanna play for?
Ah ha ha!
I gotta take over the apple orchard someday.
My folks are telling me to join the judo club next year like my brother.
After elementary school, no more soccer for me...
...
Ah, but we get to play a tough team from another prefecture at camp next week.
We're countin' on you, Ace!
Camp...
SIGH
That means...
three whole days stuck with that coach?!
TOTTER...


Hey, let me read you a bit
and you tell me what you think!
Hey, Nats...
Hi...
Still can't write?
Whoa ...
brother only two-dimensiona what other world could you be in jus an annoying freeloader no way!"
Nope. Your books are for nerds, Ritsuko,
not athletes like me.
I can't understand a word of it...
You little—!
If I didn't write this stuff you'd be out on the streets!
Don't make fun of light novels!
How about I tell everyone you grab your mom's boobs?!
Wha—
Quit it, you old hag!
Hag?! Wash your mouth out, brat!
AAAAGH!

Hmmm... Well...
Hey... how come my name has "summer" in it when I was born in March?
Well, the doctor said to us, "If he can hold out until summer, he'll be just fine."
Uh-huh.
When you were born, you were very small. I told you how you needed surgery, and we weren't sure you'd make it, right?
And now look at you! Grown up into a soccer kid!
Seems like a dream sometimes.
So your dad named you Natsuru, from "summer" and "stay," in the hope that you'd be healthy and stick around 'til summer.
Hmm...

B... But... It's summer vacation...
Huh?
Rits, how about I go stay at Grandpa's house until you finish writing?
It's easier to concentrate if you're alone, right?
In return, when you finish, we can go to the movies and get Chinese.
It's fine! I can have watermelon at Grandpa's.
All right... Sorry, but can you go to Grandpa's straight from soccer camp?
You know what bus to take, right?
You don't need to act so mature that quickly, you know.
But I appreciate it.
...
That's really sweet...
Ah, right...
Um, about soccer camp...
Nats.

I'll give it my all!
Got your phone?
Yeah.
Uh...
okay...
Your homework?
Yup.

I at least put a lot of effort into your lunch!
I'm proud of this one!
Eat it right on the bus, okay!
MREEEN
MREEEN
MREEEN
Go kick some butt!
You, too.
...

Uh, hi, Natsuru?
What're you doing? Everyone's on the bus, we're waiting for you...
Huh?
Why not?!
What?
What's wrong?
Coach...
It's Natsuru...
Cool!!
He says he has the flu and he can't come to camp...
MREEEN
MREEEN
MREEEN

...
POP
10
...
The hell
am I doing...

Suzumura...
Another special sale?
Looks heavy...
It's fine.
Why are you eating lunch out here?

...
You hate soccer?
No, I love it.
But then... I...
didn't want to get on the bus...
I was...
supposed to go to soccer camp today.
...
I love it, but still...I
ボンッ
KICK

MREEEN
The cat...
She's getting bigger.
MREEEN
...
Tofu...
MREEEN
MREEEN
Want to come see...?

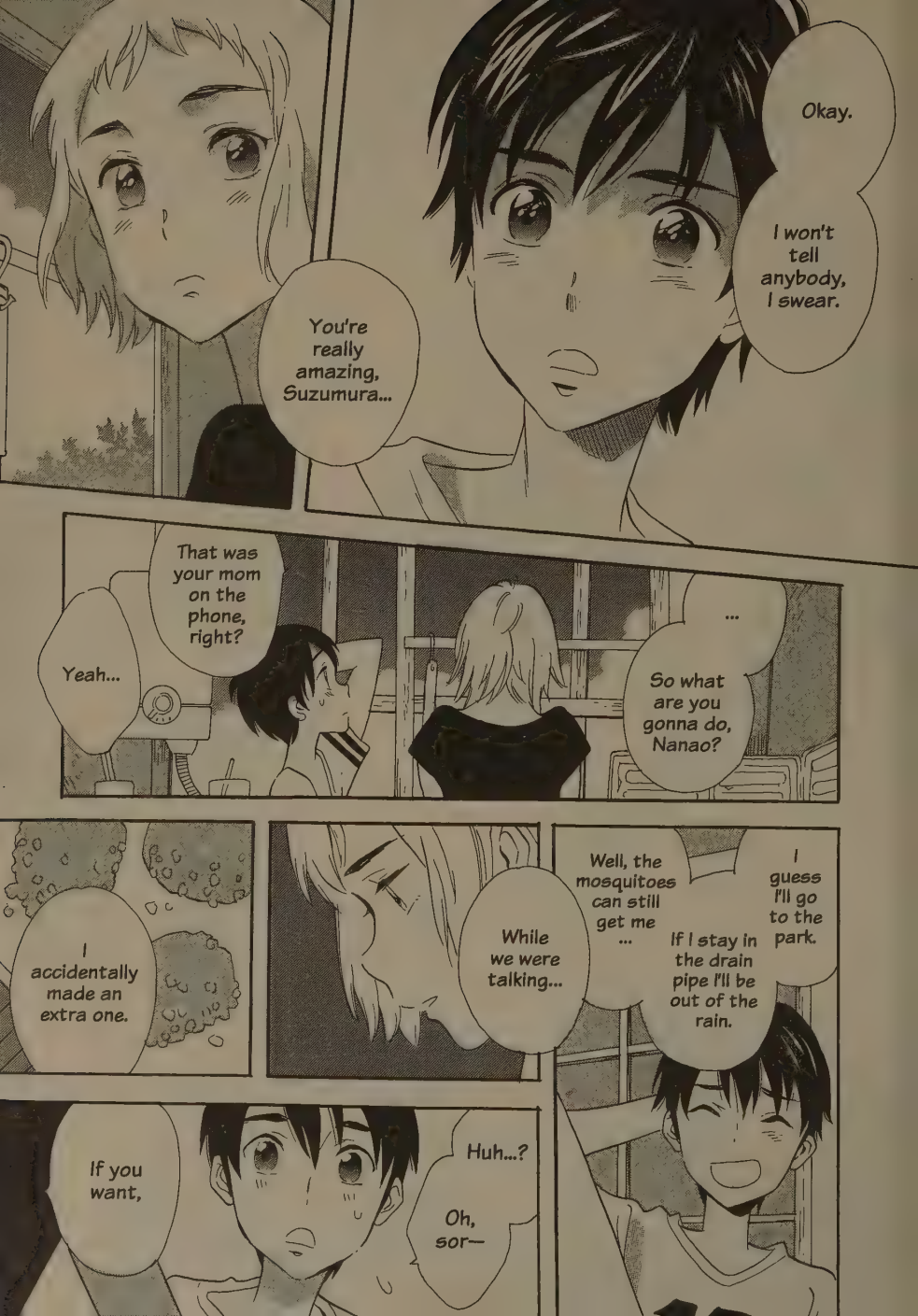
Ah!
Yuuta!
Sis, you brought your boy-friend!
Wow, Tofu!
You're all soft and fluffy!
Silken tofu.
There's something wrong with her back foot, though.
She's much healthier, but this foot won't move.
You're right.
Maybe it's broken...
I'd like to take her to the vet, but...

SKRIT
カリ
SKRIT
カリ
SKRIT
Whoa!
ぴゅん
SPRING!
Ha ha.
Wow!
The backyard ...
smells funny...

Those were meant to be soccer balls, right?
It was really good...
Uh-huh, I ate it.
Y-Yeah ...
Just got here...
Oh! Ri—
Mom?!
MMF!
Yeah, I will!
I'm gonna be on Real Madrid someday!
HA HA
MMFF!
Okay, practice is starting...
...
Now what?
WHEW

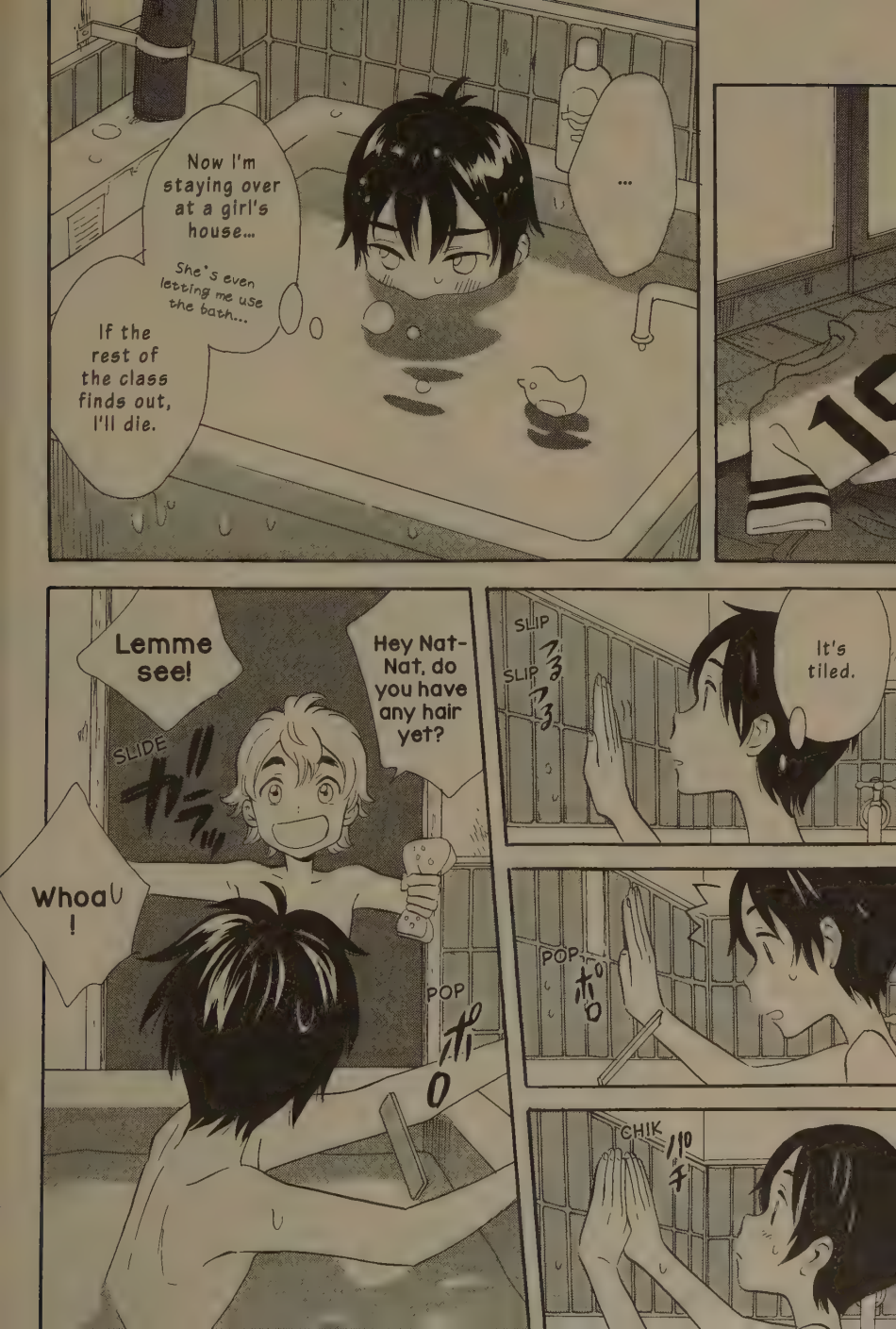
What're you making?
Tuna burgers.
Wow!
Huh?
You can make that yourself !?
We're only in sixth grade!
My mom only gets the frozen stuff.
Huh ?
Our dad's a fisherman. He's rarely home.
Right now he's crab fishing in Alaska.
But he gives us money when he's back.
Suzumura ...
are you two really living alone?
What do you do for money?

What about your mom...?
She left a long time ago.
Don't tell anyone.
If people find out, we'll get taken in by child welfare or something and they won't let us stay in this house.
Then Dad would be all alone...
Besides, the two of us
are doing all right...
ぎゅ
SQUISH


You're really amazing, Suzumura...
Okay.
I won't tell anybody, I swear.
That was your mom on the phone, right?
Yeah...
...
So what are you gonna do, Nanao?
I accidentally made an extra one.
While we were talking...
Well, the mosquitoes can still get me ...
If I stay in the drain pipe I'll be out of the rain.
I guess I'll go to the park.
If you want,
Huh...?
Oh, sor—

you can stay here.
Room and board,
500 yen per night.
Thanks for the yummy food!!

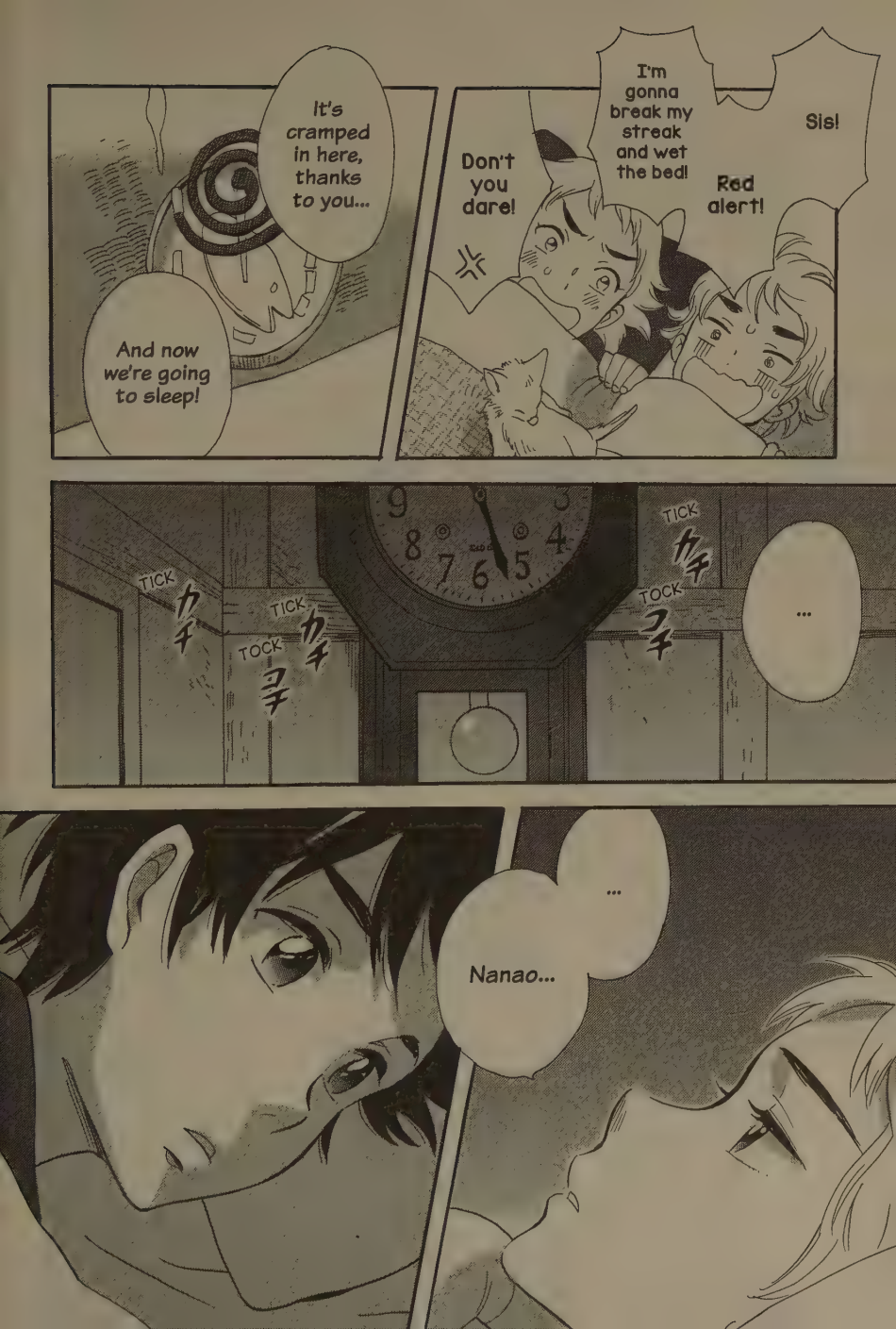
I over-cooked them a little this time.
Wow, this is really good.
Thanks...
I feel like such a loser...
はむ
MUNCH
Really...
Oh, no...
Usually I make them better.
No, we mustn't ...
People are staring!
MUNCH
はむ
MUNCH
はむ
We can't do this here!
...
MUNCH
はむん
MUNCH
はむん
SKRAPE
SKRAPE
...
NOM
まぐ
NOM
まぐ


Now I'm staying over at a girl's house...
She's even letting me use the bath...
If the rest of the class finds out, I'll die.
...
Lemme see!
SLIDE
ガラッ
Hey Nat-Nat, do you have any hair yet?
Whoa!
POP
ポロ
SLIP
スル
SLIP
スル
It's tiled.
POP
ポロ
CHIK
ピチ

Hey Nat-Nat, d'you have a girlfriend?
SCRUB
SCRUB
... Nat-Nat, is my name now... U
But, y'know...
my sister said before that you're really cool!
They won't even talk to me. ㅠㅅㅠ
No way.
I don't care about girls.
Oh ho.
I see...
Huh?
Whaaat?!

I don't have any more clean blankets, so...
No, it's okay...
Wanna sleep in my room, Nat-Nat?
No, I won't fit...
She said...
I'm cool ...?

It's hot. I can't sleep.
'cause you're in that stuffy closet ...
Nat-Nat, tell me a scary story.
.....
A scary story?
Okay...
This is the best one I know.
Now, I heard this story from my mom...
....
And then, she turned around and said:
NOW I'VE FOOOUND YOOOU!!
Hey...
SHIVER ガタガタ
SHAKE ガクガク SHAKE
Are you...


It's cramped in here, thanks to you...
And now we're going to sleep!
Don't you dare!
I'm gonna break my streak and wet the bed!
Sis!
Red alert!
TICK
カチ
TOCK
コチ
...
Nanao...

TAP
TAP TAP
Do you
believe in ghosts?
Wh... What was that...
Someone's tapping on the window...?
?!
SKRATCH SKRATCH
BAM
RAT TAT
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

No...
What is that noise?!
Wh...
SKRATCH
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
...
I'm so sorry...
No no no!
I'm sorry! I'm sorry!
Don't come in...
I'm scared !!

O...
Okay!!
Nanao.
Help...
SLIDE
カラッ

It...
FLUTTER
BZZ BZZ BZZ
BZZZZ
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ
It's a stag beetle!
Here, Suzumura, look at—
It must've flown at the window.
Ha ha! Sheesh...
It really scared us!
Oooh! Lemme hold it!!

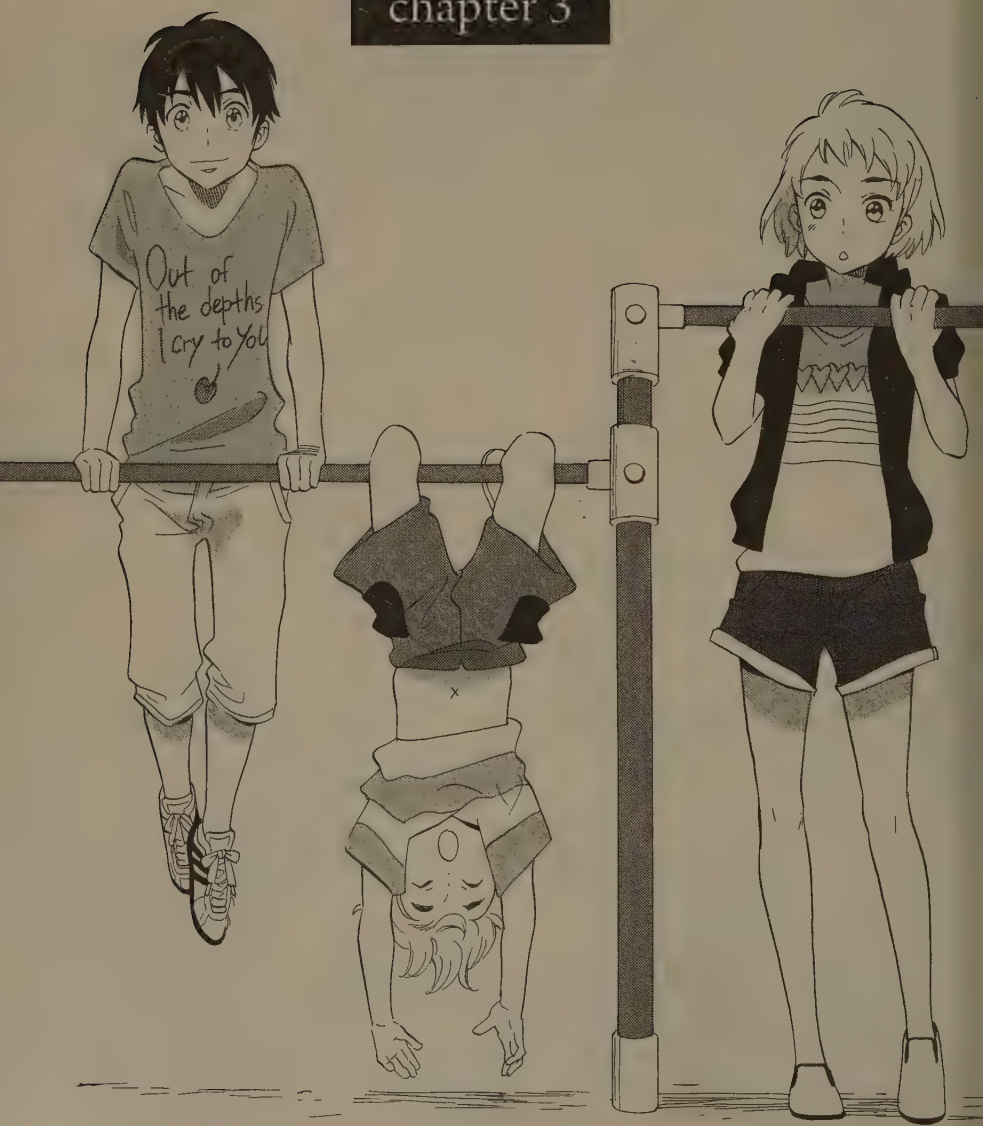
I... I'm sorry...
I shouldn't have told a scary story...
...
Sor—

Whoa...

I didn't
know the real reason that she was crying.
I was just carried away by the feeling of her in my arms,
trembling and warm.

What's going on?

chapter 3



What's its name gonna be?
Benz!!
Why Benz ...?
'cause he's all black!
Shouldn't it be Beetle...?
Benz! Go on and eat your eggplant!
We'll be all right...
Sis, I don't think he likes eggplant.
Is there any water-melon?
We can't afford that!!
if we spend just 1000 yen per day...
WHAT
HOW MUC
98
385
198
SOAP
TERIES
MILK

Sis, wait!
Today I have to get to the store without touching the ground.
Come on, we gotta finish shopping before it gets too hot.
TUG
You're being weird again...
Nooo!
If I touch the ground, I die...
I can't make it...
TWITCH
TWITCH
...

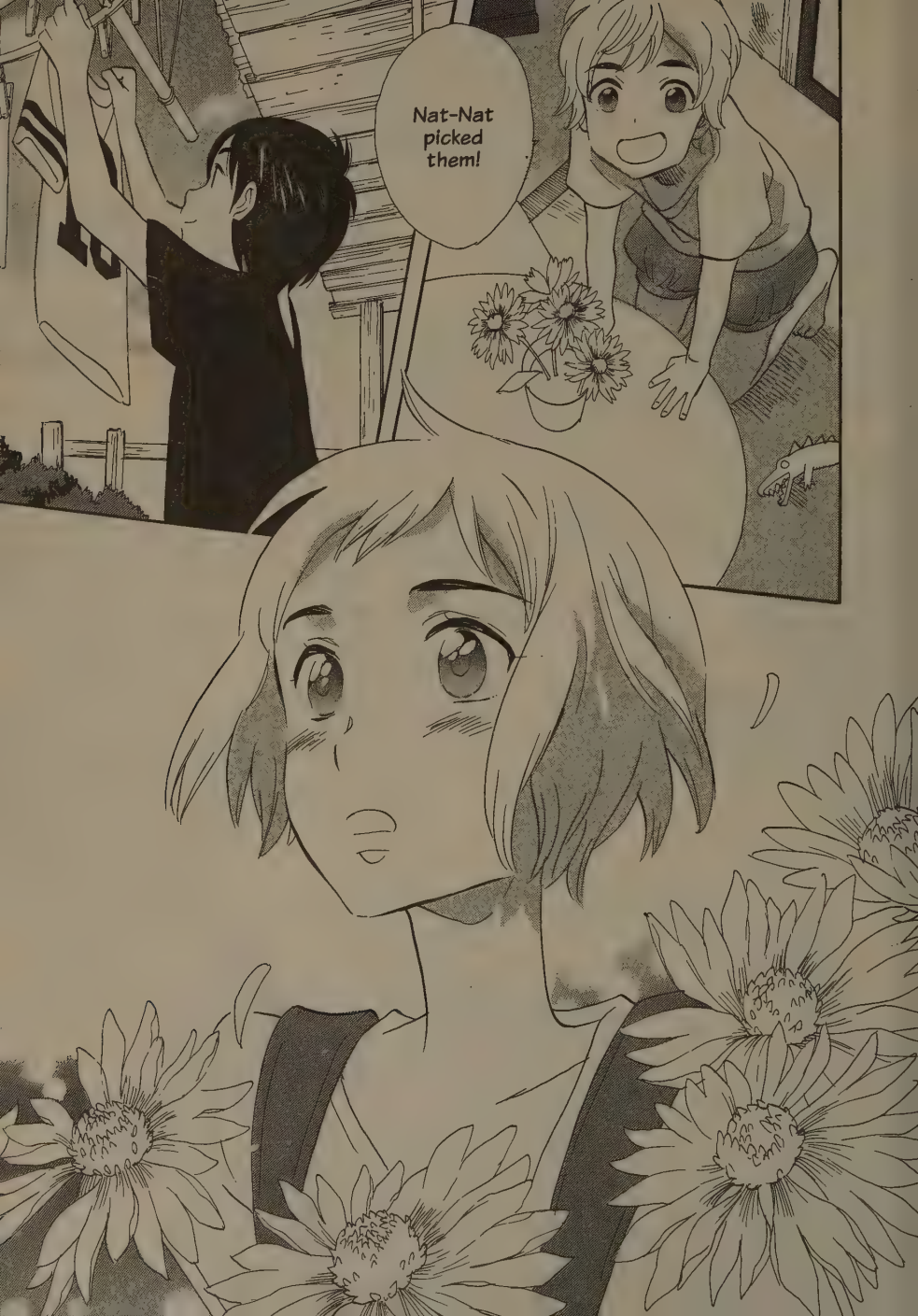
Then what if we go like this?
Yaaaah!
HA HA HA...
I wanna read the new Jump.
Can we stop at the book-store?
Sure.

EASY RECIPES THAT HE'LL LOVE!
EASY RECIPES THAT HE'LL LOVE!
OUQUET
¥390
Hmm...
Eggs, bean sprouts...
And what else? Bread?
All done.
WHIP

390 yen...
You want them?
...No.
It's not something we need...
Let's go.
I'll go ahead home.
Be home by lunch, okay?
Okay!

Nat-Nat, teach me some soccer!
Somehow...
it feels like we're really living together.
I wonder...
what Nanao likes to eat...
I'll have to ask him...

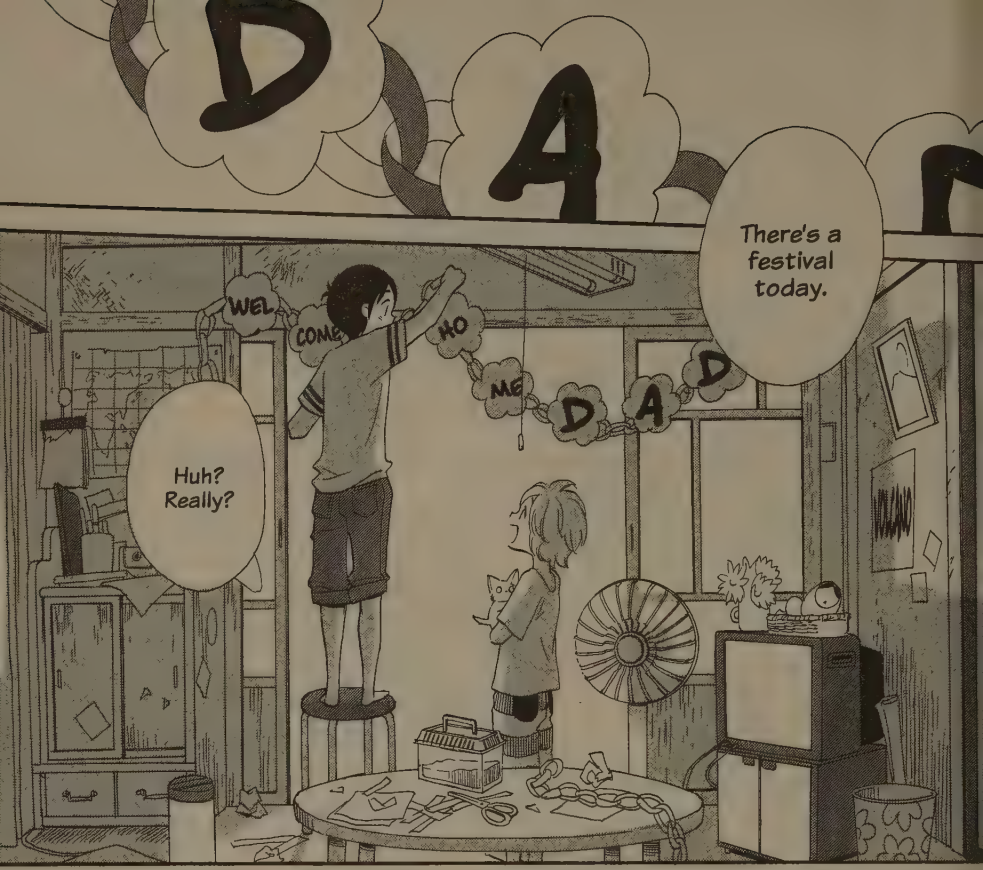
Ugh, you're all sweaty!
Change your clothes and feed Tofu!
Sis! Lunch please!
We're hooome!
we're back ...
BAP
Sure!
Nanao, the laundry's done, would you hang up your stuff?
"Sure," he says...
HEH


Nat-Nat picked them!

Our
secret
summer
vacation.

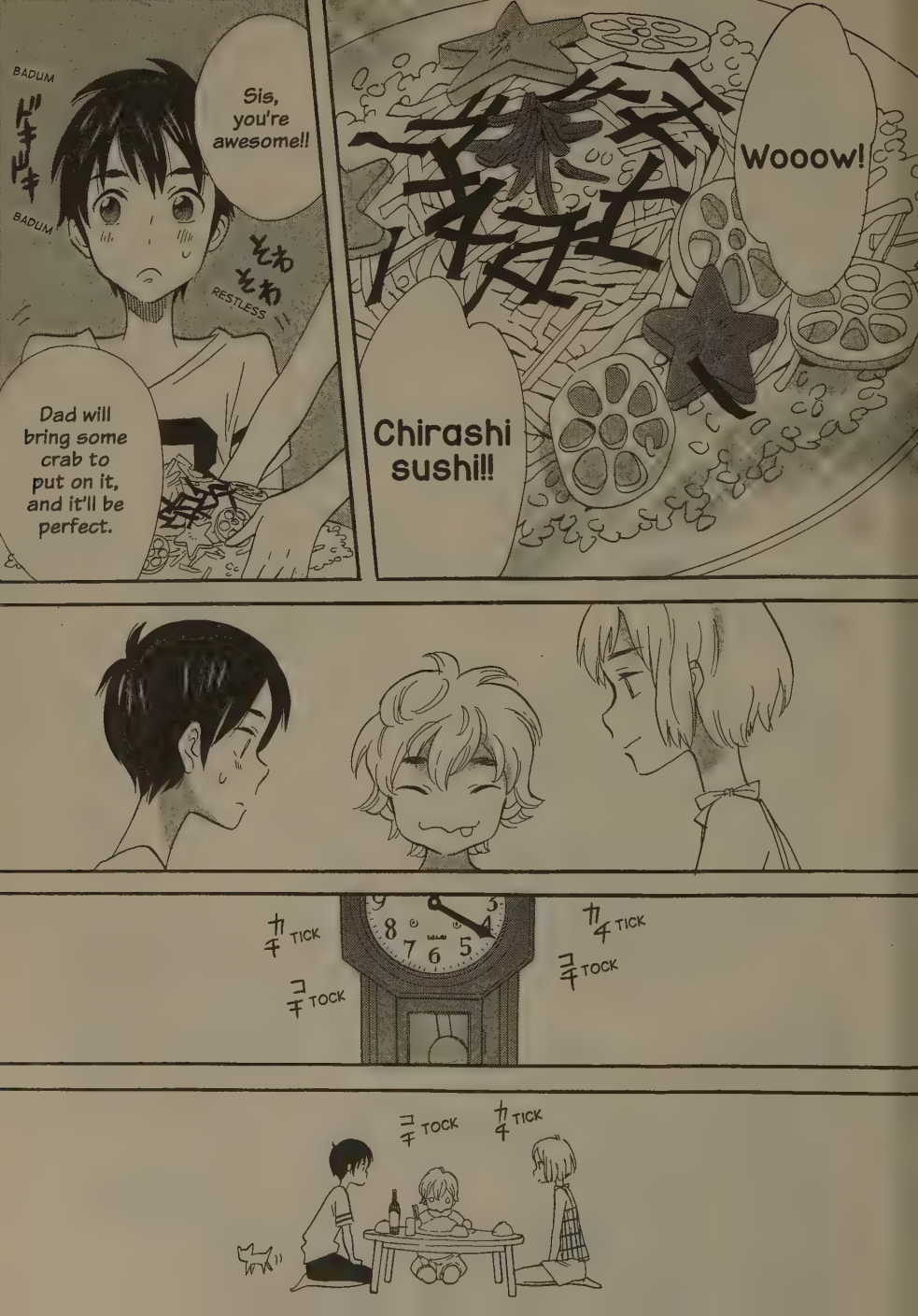
TWEET
TWEET
Time to get up,
Nanao!
YANK
ばっ
Whuh?
Nat-Nat, you're gonna make paper things with me!
We've got a busy day!
Hurry up, I have to clean!

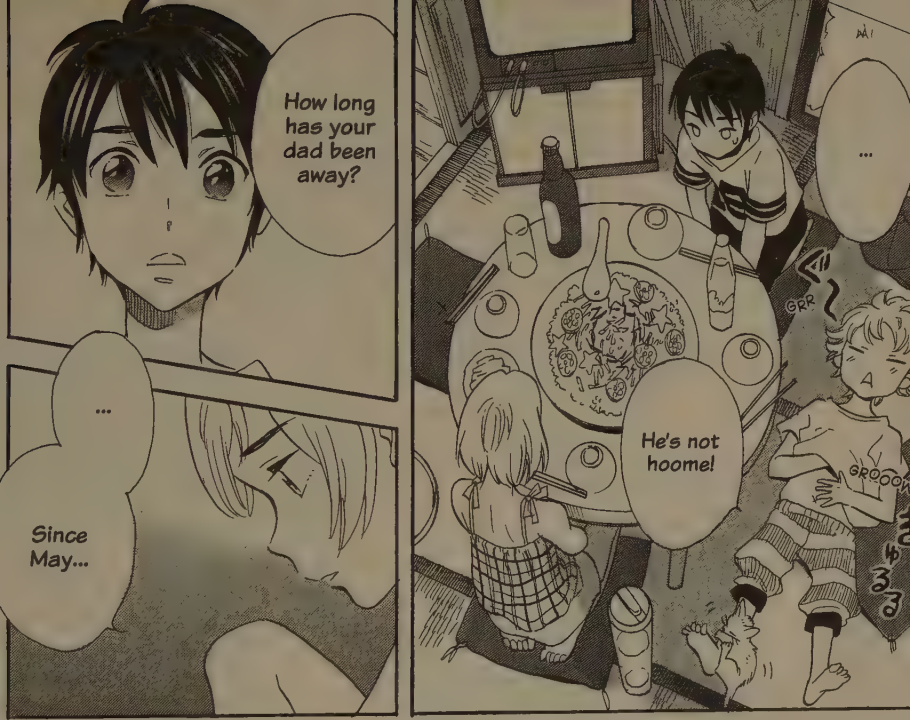
Our dad's coming home today!
Then... I should go home...
He'll get mad...
Huh...?
No, it's okay!
Stay here.
I'll introduce you.
In...
Introduce me?!


D
A
There's a festival today.
WEL
COME
HO
ME
D A D
Huh? Really?

They close all the roads to cars and everyone in town dances!
Wow!
You've never been, Nat-Nat?
Dad always takes us!

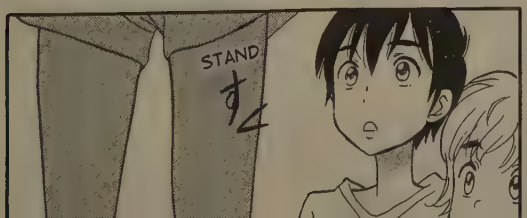
They're in the drawer in Grandpa's room.
Sis, we need thumb—
Okay.
THUP
THUP
THUP
Do you have any thumb tacks?
It won't stay up with tape.
wa
S... Sorry,
...
I meant Dad's room...
...
Grandpa?
?


BADUM
ドキドキ
BADUM
Sis, you're awesome!!
そわそわ
RESTLESS
Dad will bring some crab to put on it, and it'll be perfect.
Wooow!
Chirashi sushi!!
カチ TICK
コチ TOCK
カチ TICK
コチ TOCK
コチ TOCK
カチ TICK


How long has your dad been away?
...
Since May...
...
He's not hoome!
GRR
GROOOO

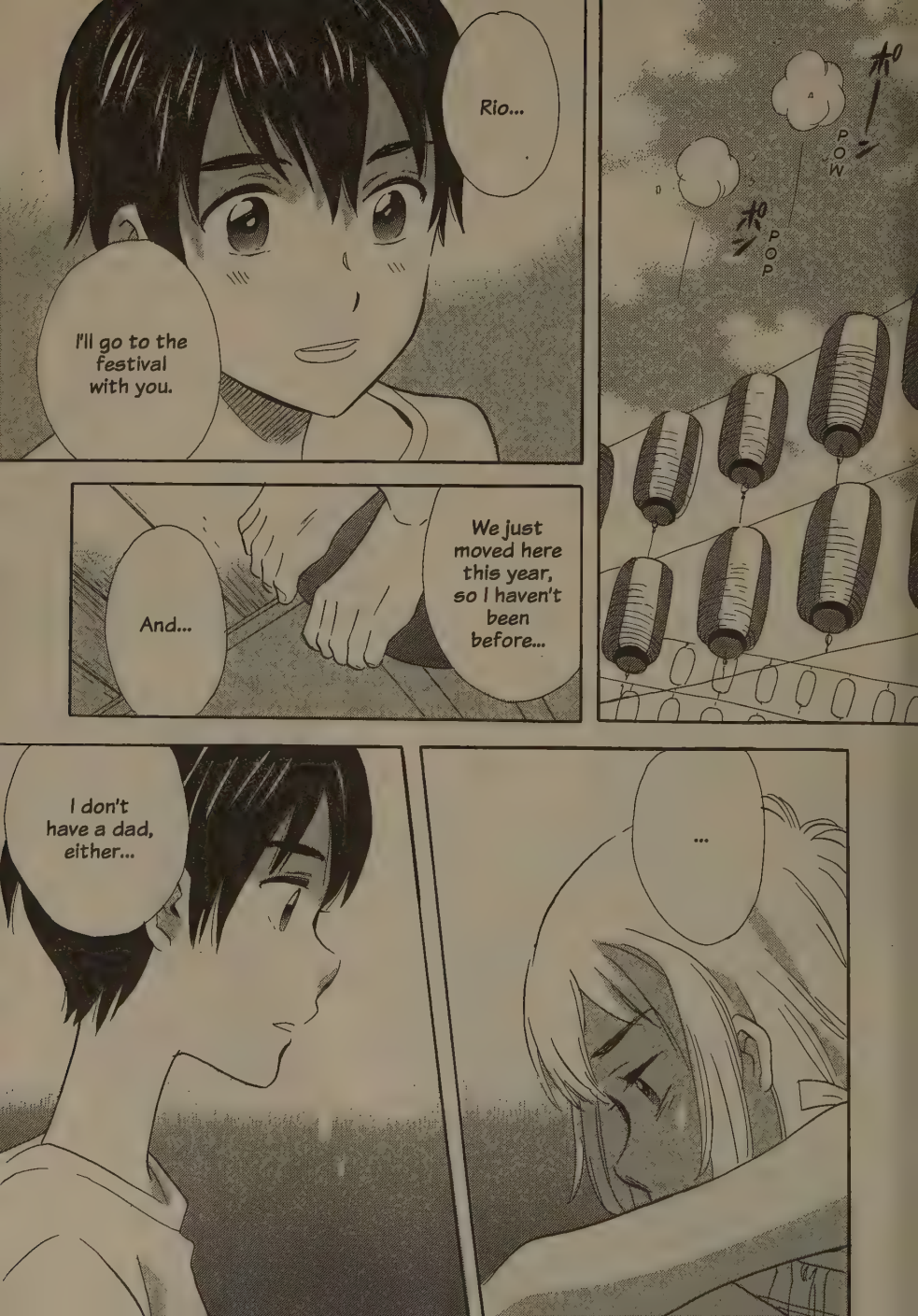
WEL
POP
POW
Aaw, it's already started.

But he said he'd be back in time for the festival...
Three whole months ?!


STAND

Dad said he's going abroad so his phone won't work.
He must still be in Alaska trying to catch crabs...
...cannot be completed at this time.
The party you are trying to reach may be outside the service area...
BEEP
BEEP BIP
Whaaat ?
Suzumura!
But I'm Suzumura, too.
Not you.
Hey, can we eat the sushi?

...Rio?
...
What was that?
Um... Huh?
Your name's Rio, isn't it?
Yeah, so...?
....


Rio...
I'll go to the festival with you.
POW
POP
We just moved here this year, so I haven't been before...
And...
...
I don't have a dad, either...

What a dumb thing to say...
...
Guess that's a no...
18

Hey, can we eat?
Dunno ...
GROWL
...
Natsuru...

put this in my hair?
Will you
Hmm!
I wanna wear one, too!
whaa ?
Your yukata got eaten by moths.
I... can't do it right...

I want one!!
FRANKFURTERS
FOR ¥200
Wooow, so many people!
Ah!
EEL
Chilled Noodles
SNAP
Thanks for getting him one, Natsuru...
Sis, look. I ate all the skin.
You're being weird again...

Here!
These are for us.
Nice and cold.
ZHAAAAA
Uhm... The dancers will have to take a break
until the down-pour passes.
Sorry, folks!

C'mon!
THUMP
EEP!
Hee hee.
We've got umbrellas! Looks like we come out on top.
And Mama did my yukata for me.
It's Tsumori Chisato.
P...
Princess!! Look!!

Bon, Bon, the festival,
only this day and the morrow...
Wh...
Why...
FLASH
Why is Suzumura with Nanao?!

The peony that blossoms soon drops its petals...
And the day after shall bring the drooping bride...
Only for this day, the flowers of kindness bloom...
18
RUMBLE
Scared of a little thunder, Natsuru?
Heh heh...
That's not it.
Rio, are you okay?
Your yukata's getting soaked...
You know, when you're all grown up,
if you stand outside getting soaked while watching a storm, people will think there's something wrong with you.

So let's get soaked
while we still can.
I guess that's true...
It is true.
GRAA
DRRAAA
I'm gonna eat all the rain!!
AH HA HA!
Sis, Nat-Nat, watch this!

Natsuru...
Thank you.
I fell in love

with Rio
Suzumura.

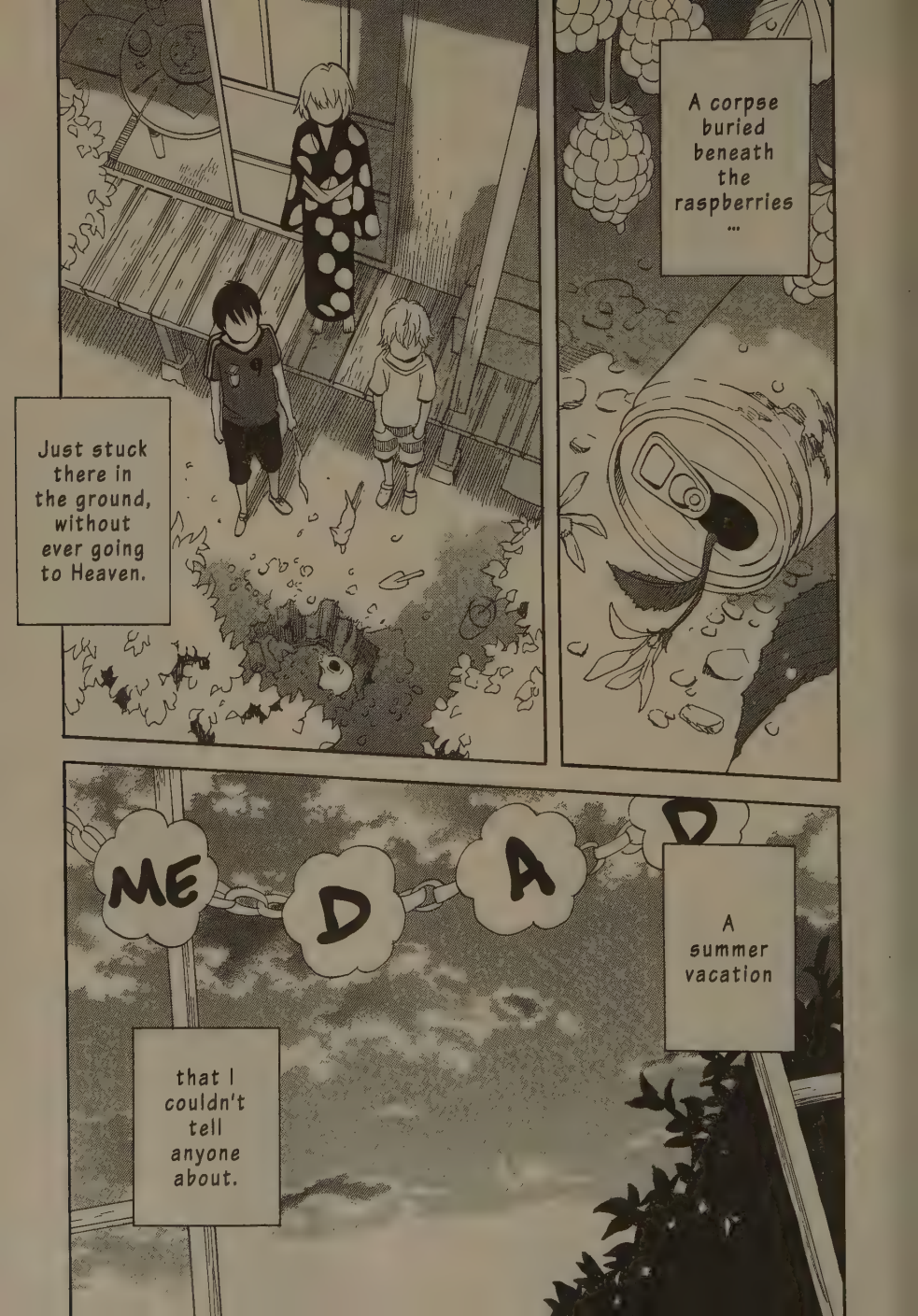
カナ CHIT
カナ CHIT
カナ CHIT
カナ CHIT
18
KITCHOO!
ごしゅ

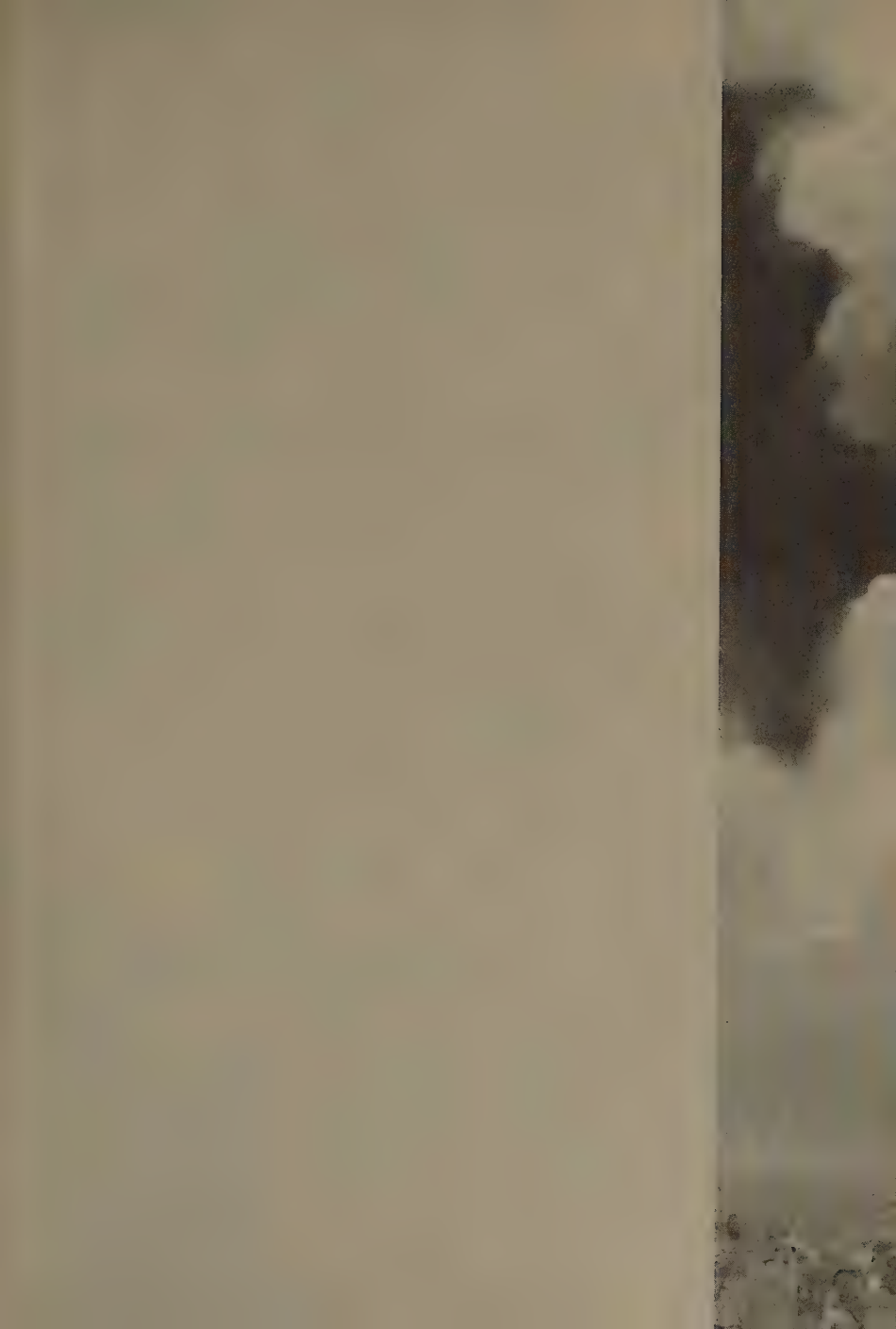
DIG
DIG
Aww...
Wild straw-berries?
Or raspberries ?
There's so many ...
...
Whatcha doing, Nat-Nat?
Huh?!
Benz died, so I buried him.
Is that what the funny smell is?
Sort of sweet, but sort of rotten...
I wonder if we can eat them...

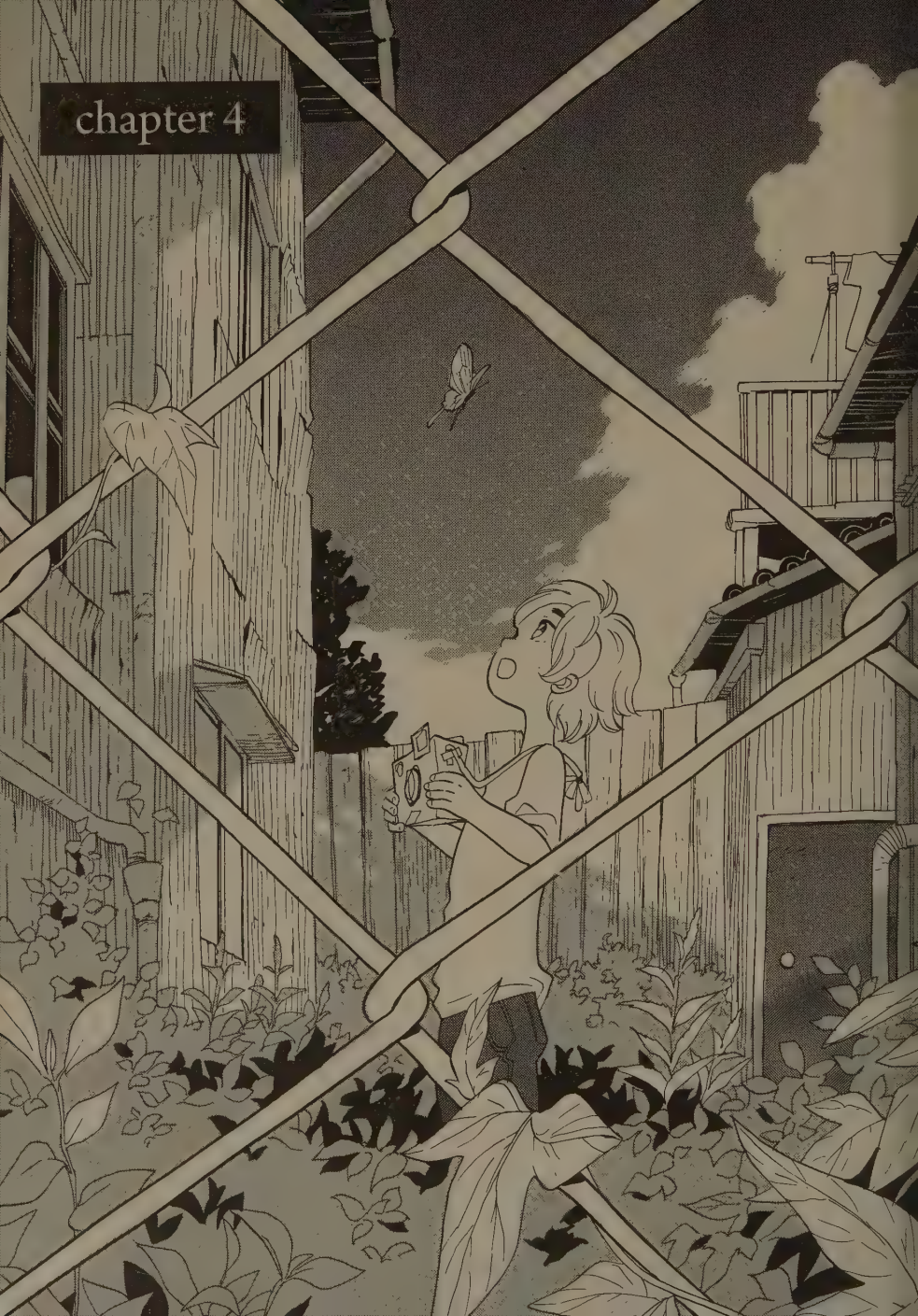
I have to say bye!
I wanna see him again!
Where'd you bury Benz?
Awww!
He already seemed pretty weak when we found him. It was just his time...
Huh?
Maybe he already went to Heaven.
Ha ha! No way...
That's weird. He's gone.
I buried him right here...
I didn't bury him that deep, though...
SHUNK

Ah...
Clothes?
What's this?
Huh?

What's wrong?!
WAAAAAAH!


A corpse buried beneath the raspberries ...
Just stuck there in the ground, without ever going to Heaven.
ME D A D
A summer vacation
that I couldn't tell anyone about.




chapter 4

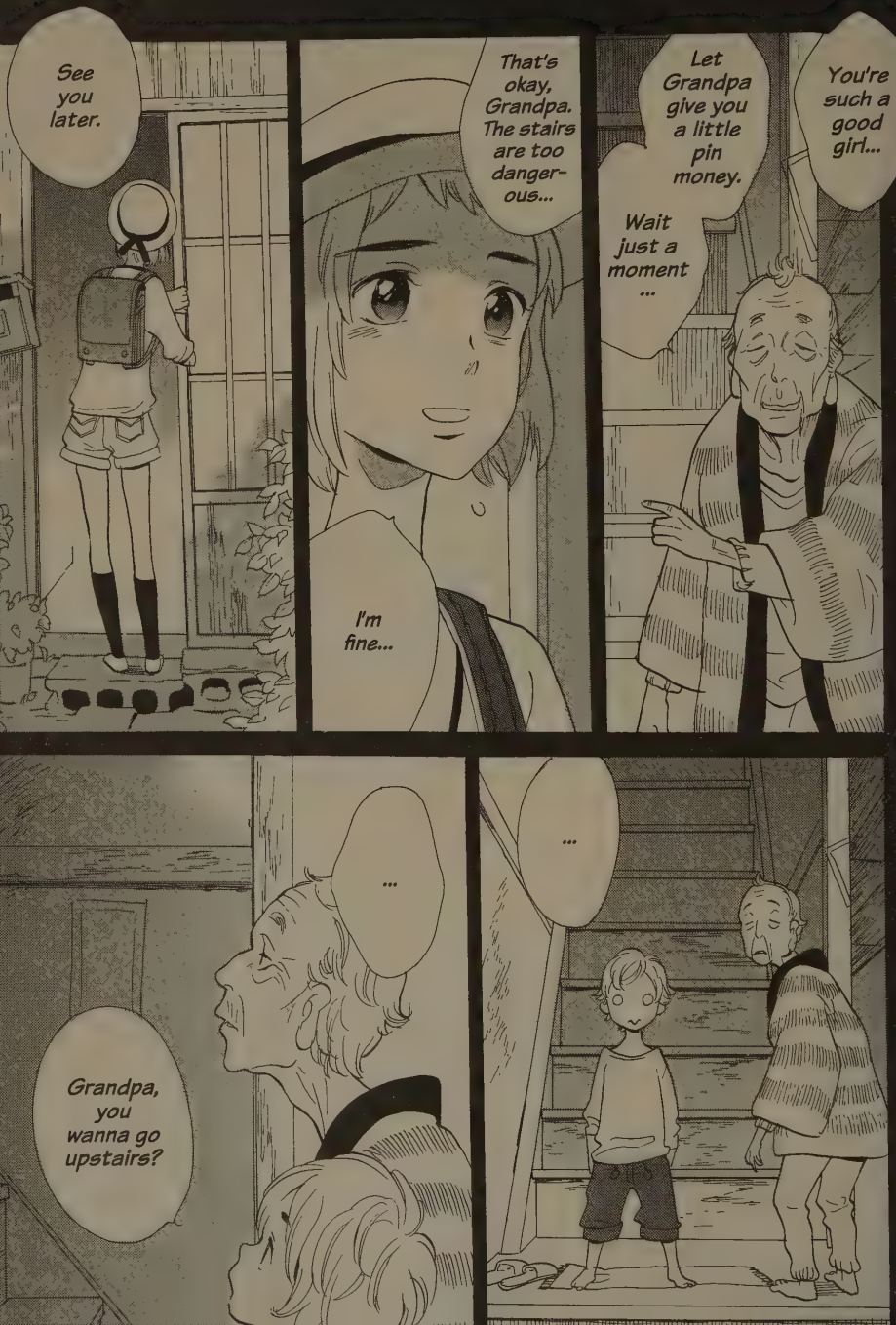
KRNCH
You just gotta have crab in fried rice.
Yep...
MNCH
むっちゃ
You know we can't afford the real thing.
Dad, that's imitation crab.
Oh...
...
CHEW
むっ
むっ
CHEW
...

WHACK
I'm off to Alaska to get you kids some real crab!!
All right...
Huh?
Wh...
Alaska? Is that a super-market?
Uhm... It's up high on the map...
Dad!!
What are you talking about ?!
Dad!!
We don't need crab!!

Hey,
you can take care of things again for a bit, right? ♡
Rio...
...
I'm the one doing everything around the house whether you're here or not.
. . . .
Grandpa's here. You'll be fine. Right?
Great, Rio! You can do anything!
I just know I can depend on you!
Ugh, you smell like booze.

Hey, Yuuta, you wanna have some crab too, right?
Craaab!
...
When will you be back...?
...
I'm so glad you're here, Rio...
HEH HEH
I'll take you to the festival again.
チャリ
JANGLE

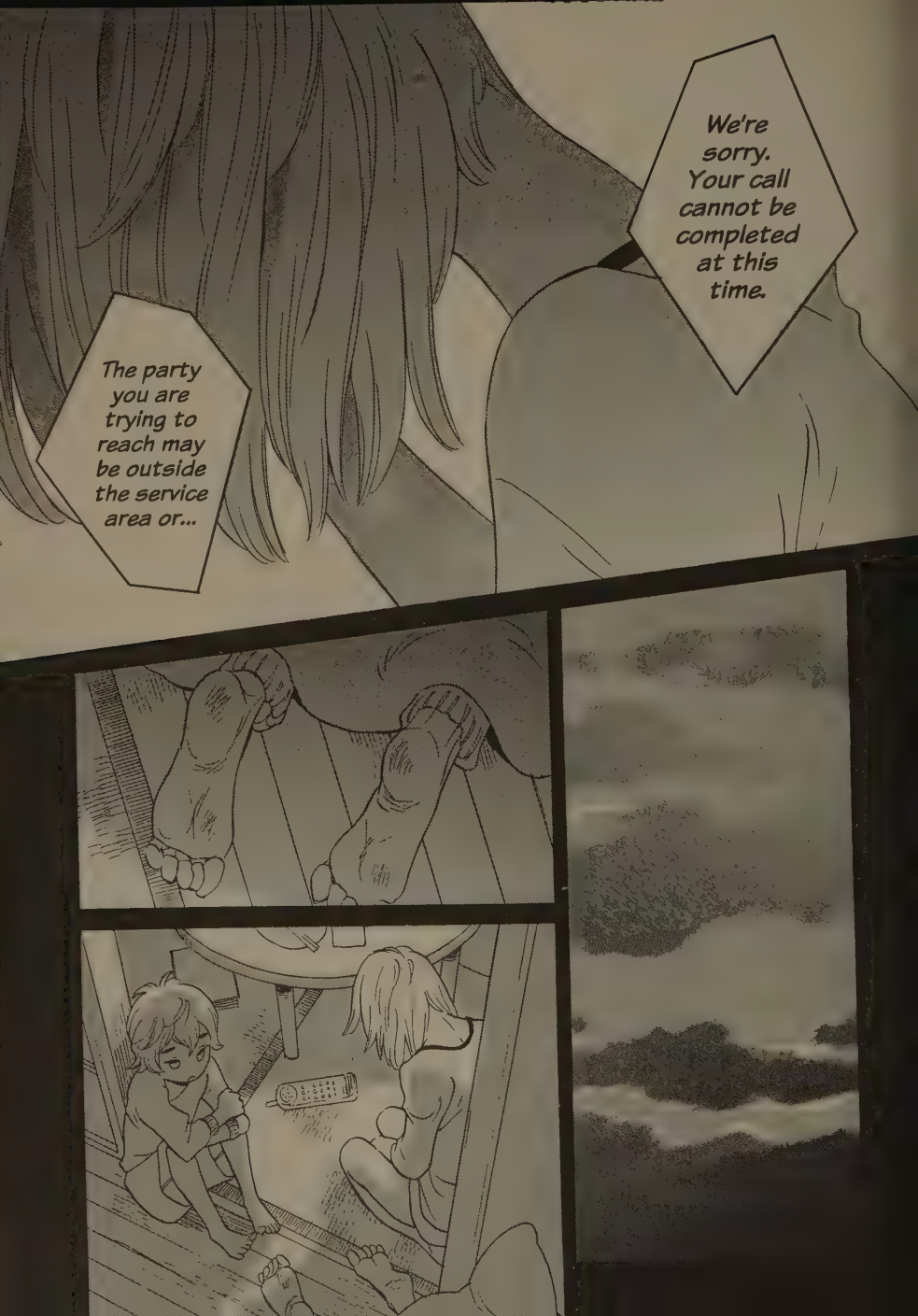
When we woke up the next day,
Dad was gone.
HMM!
Don't go to the play-ground by yourself.
And make sure Grandpa doesn't fall when he goes to the bathroom.
Uh-huh!
Okay,
I'll come home as soon as I can.
Rio...
Rio, dear...

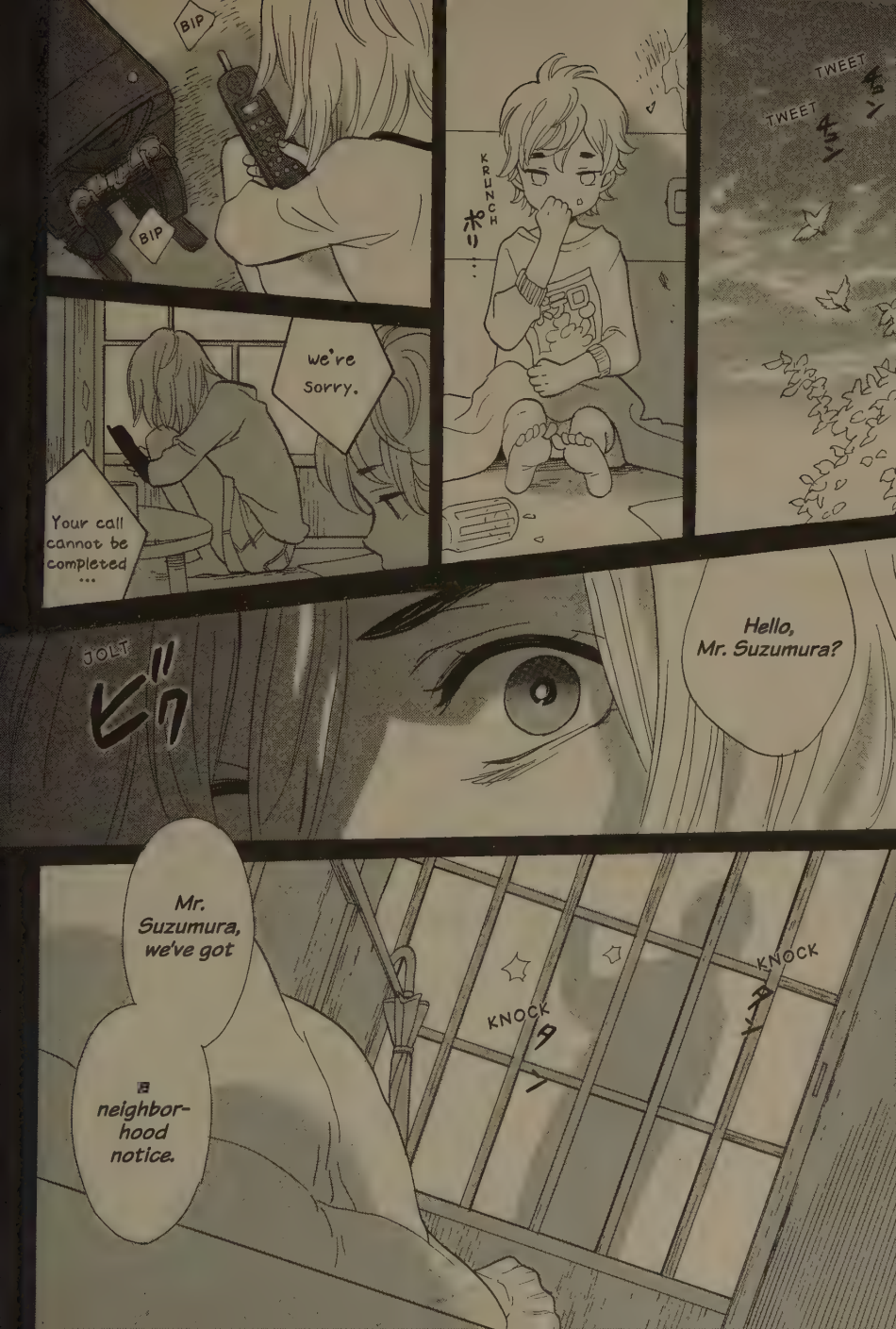

See you later.
That's okay, Grandpa. The stairs are too danger-ous...
I'm fine...
Let Grandpa give you a little pin money.
Wait just a moment ...
You're such a good girl...
...
Grandpa, you wanna go upstairs?
...

HUFF はぁ
はぁ HUFF
Hup one!
Hup two!
SLIDE
ガラ
I'm home...

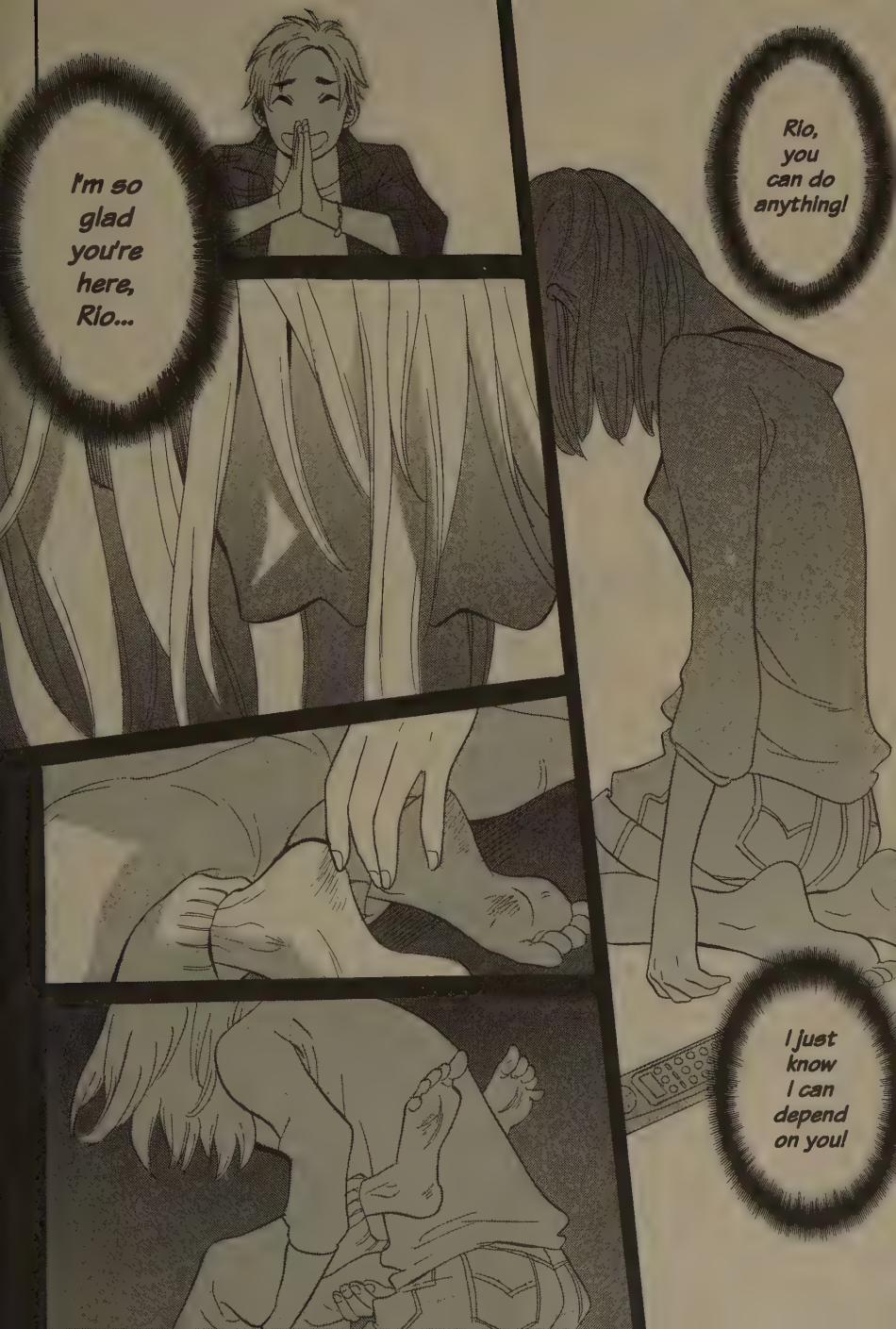
Sis...
Grandpa won't get up...
Grandpa?
Grandpa!
Grandpa!

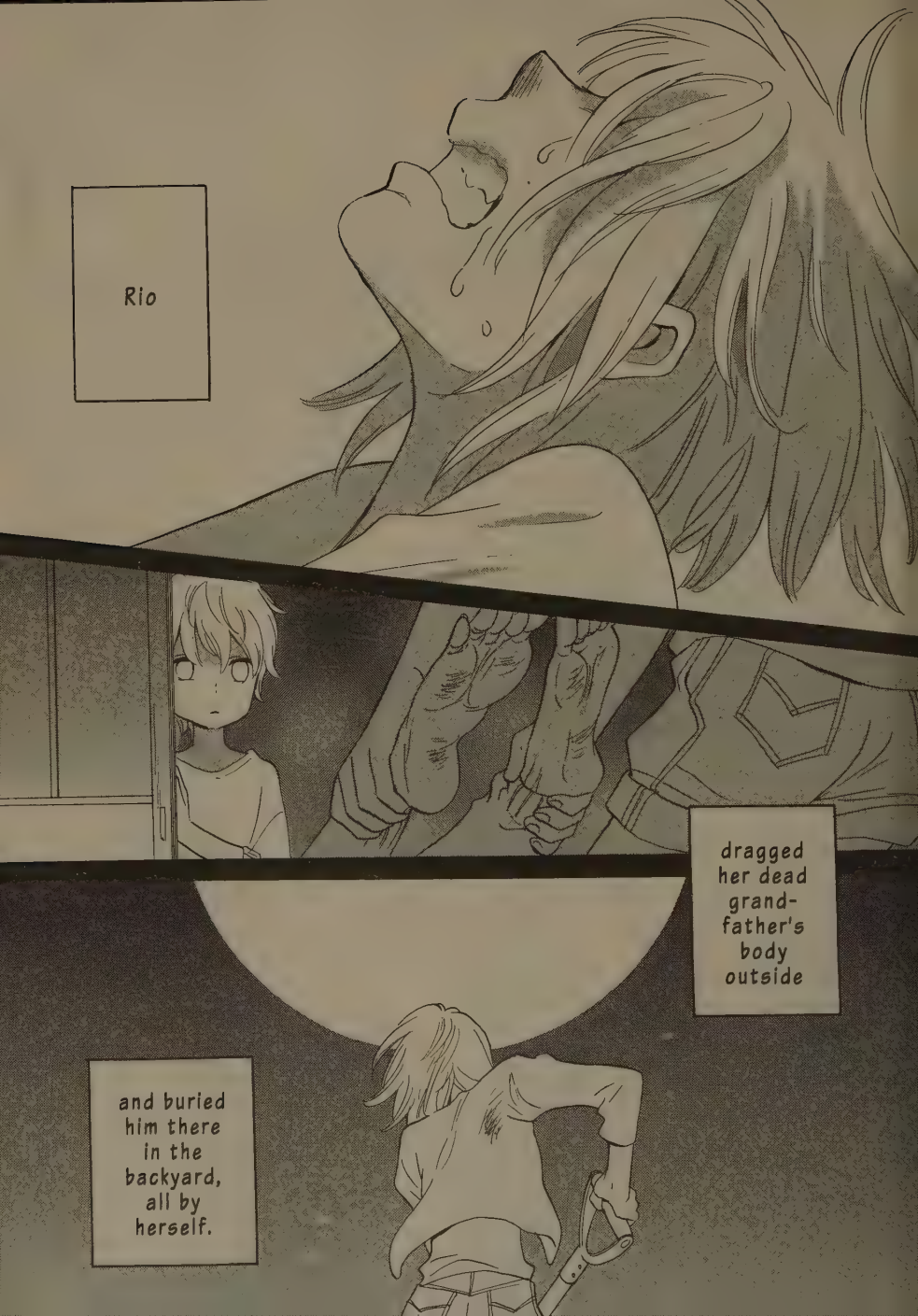
He's...
not breathing ...
BIP BIP
4 5 6
7
0 #
BIP
Dad.
Dad...


We're sorry. Your call cannot be completed at this time.
The party you are trying to reach may be outside the service area or...

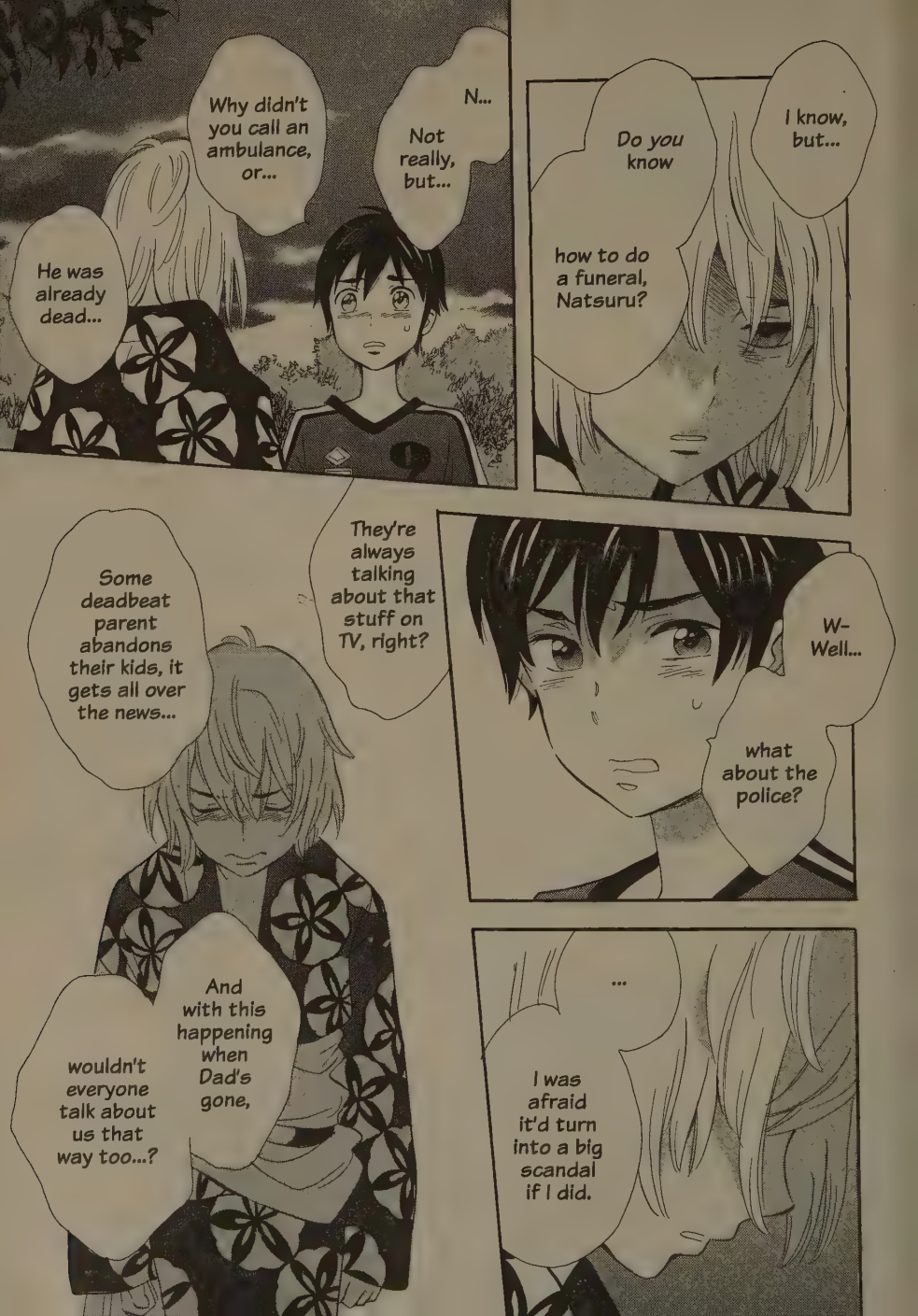

BIP
BIP
KRUNCH
ポリ…
TWEET
TWEET
we're sorry.
Your call cannot be completed …
JOLT
ビク
Hello, Mr. Suzumura?
Mr. Suzumura, we've got
a neighborhood notice.
KNOCK
KNOCK

...
ドクン
BADUM
ドクン.
BADUM
Grandpa
smells funny...
...
Sis...


I'm so glad you're here, Rio...
Rio, you can do anything!
I just know I can depend on you!

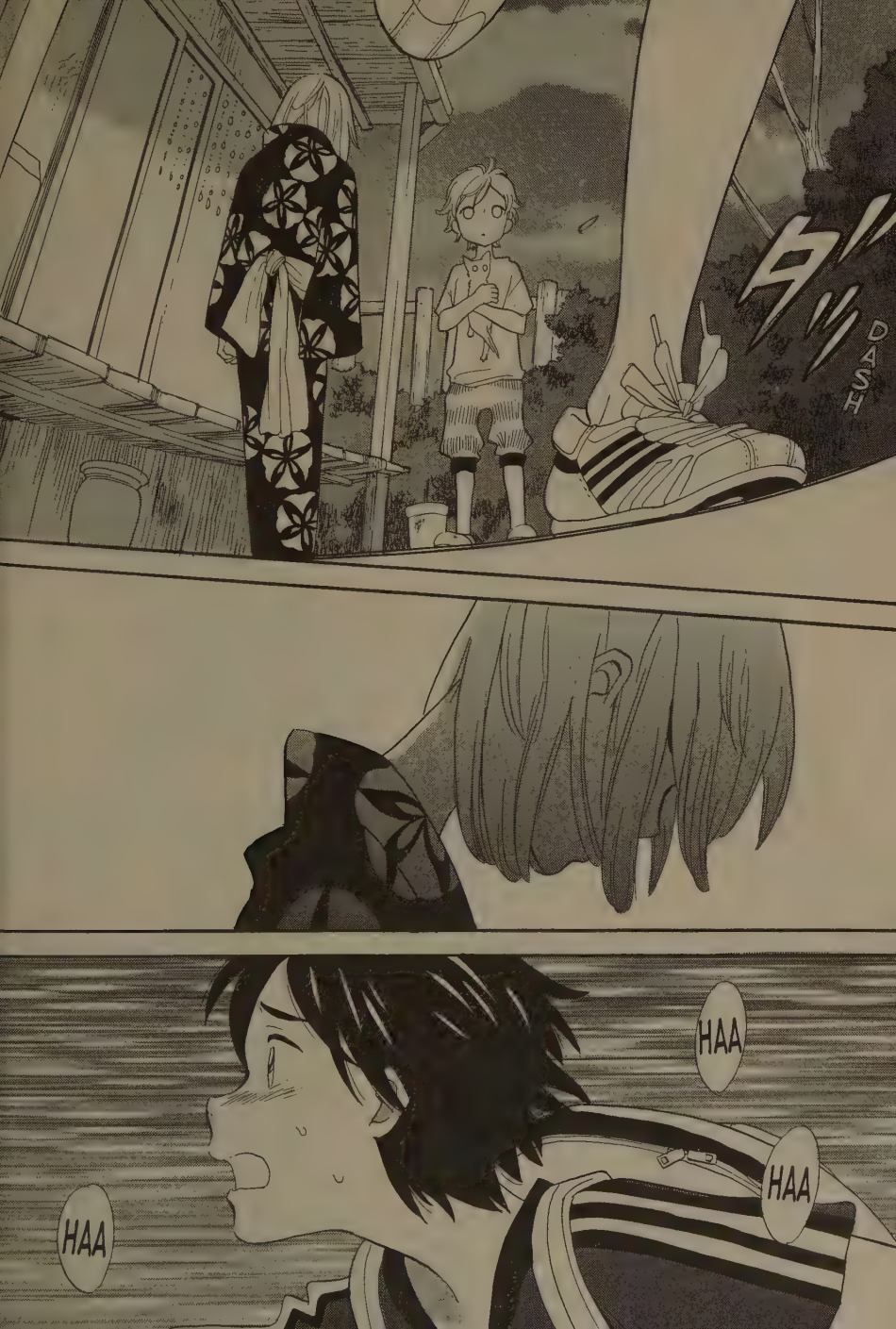

Rio
dragged her dead grand-father's body outside
and buried him there in the backyard, all by herself.

N...
No...
You can't just...
bury him here like this...
It's not right...
No...


Why didn't you call an ambulance, or...
N...
Not really, but...
He was already dead...
I know, but...
Do you know
how to do a funeral, Natsuru?
They're always talking about that stuff on TV, right?
Some deadbeat parent abandons their kids, it gets all over the news...
W-Well...
what about the police?
And with this happening when Dad's gone,
wouldn't everyone talk about us that way too...?
...
I was afraid it'd turn into a big scandal if I did.

I couldn't stand it.
D
A
Even if he is a jerk,
he's still my dad!
I don't want people who don't know anything
to talk about us like that!
So I...
have to do the right thing...
I have to protect everyone...

Please, Natsuru...
We'll have a proper funeral when my dad gets back...
And then everything will be okay...
So please...
don't tell anyone...
...
...

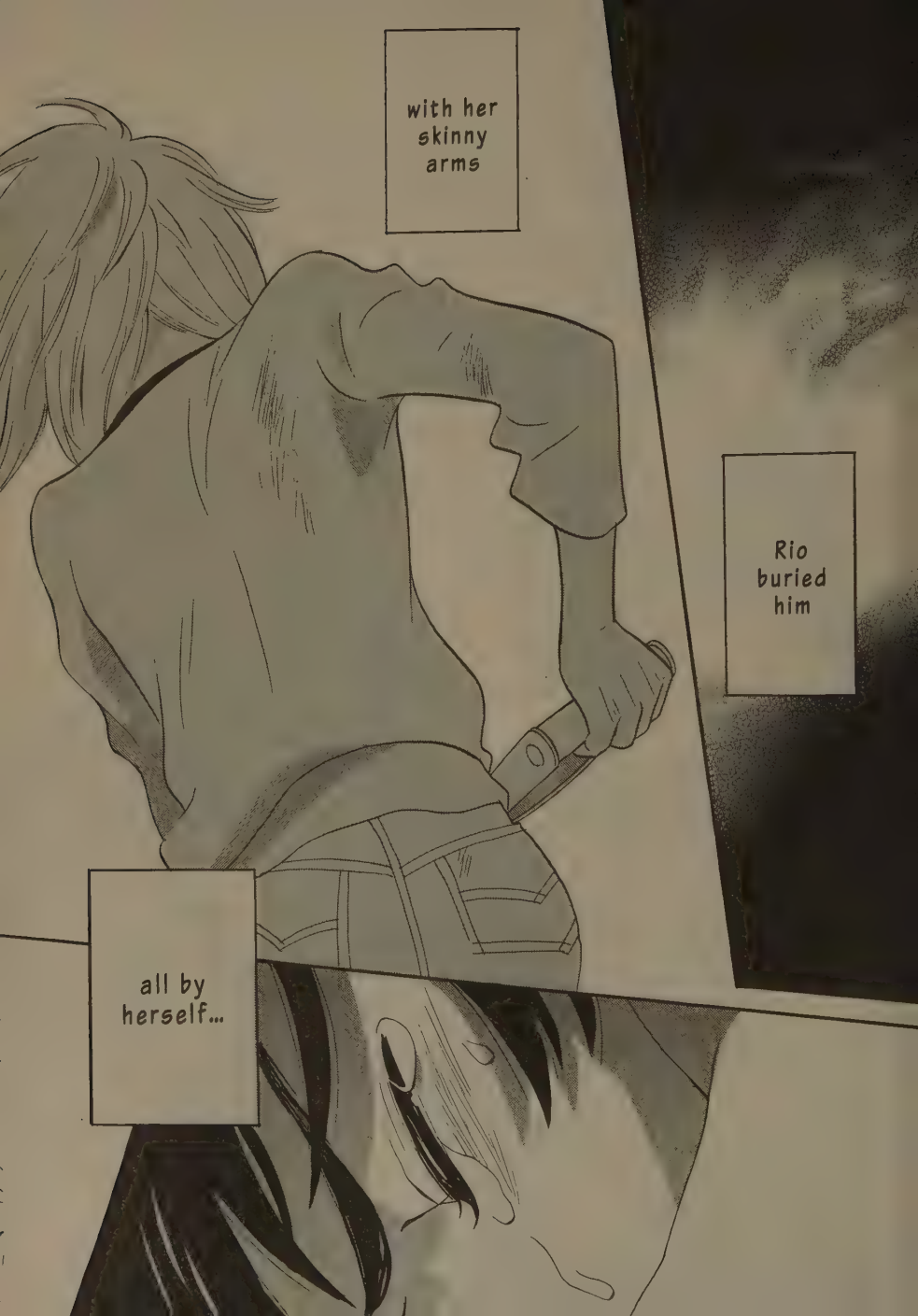

DASH
HAA
HAA
HAA

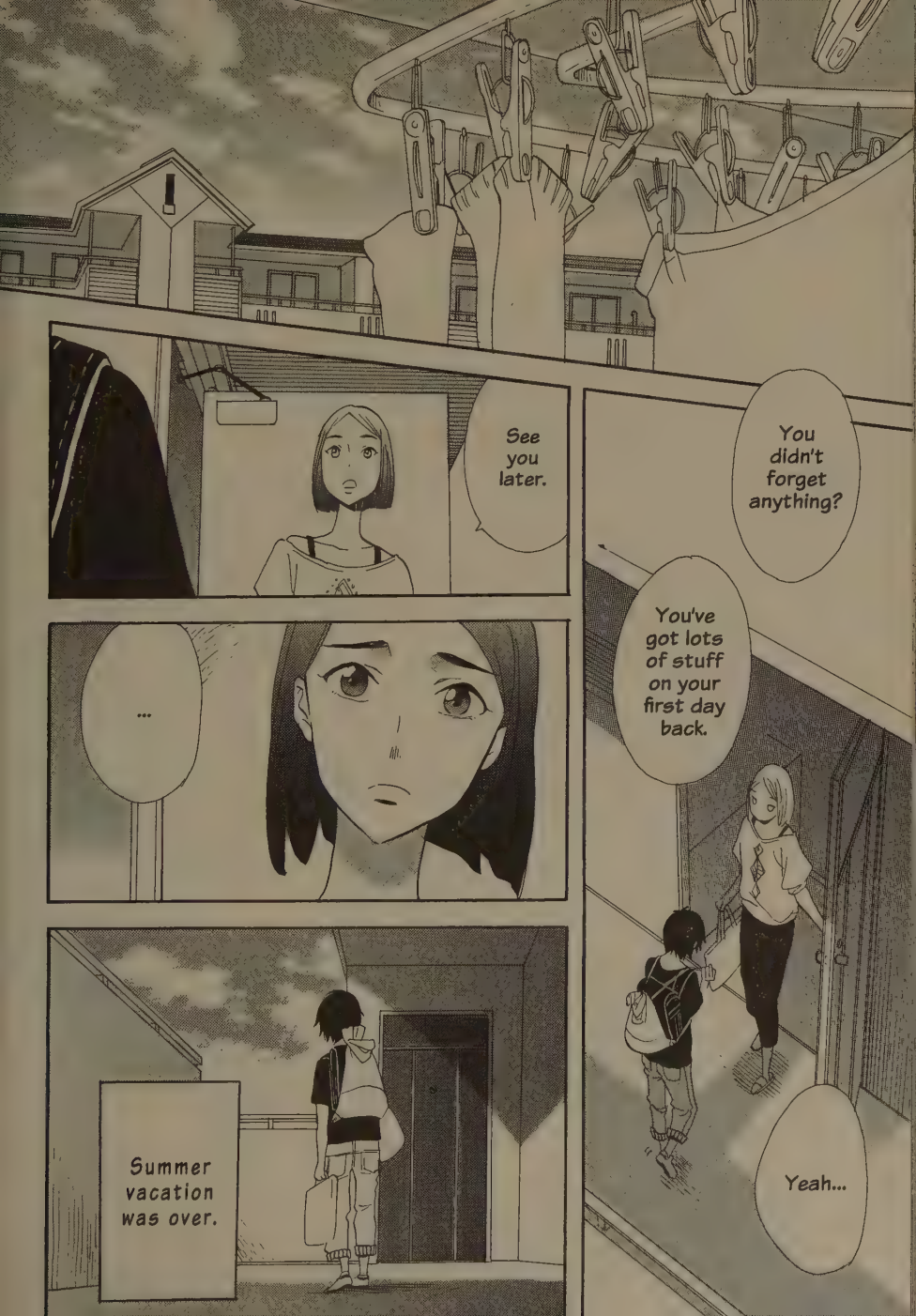
I thought you'd be at soccer camp.
In your jersey and everything.
Huh...? It's Natsuru!
The festival was today...
Did you know?
I would've invited you.

See you at school!
The world...
was so far away.
Hello, Nanao residence.

KACHAK
Natsuru!!
I'm just calling to ask where I should send the refund for the camp dues...
Uh, hello, this is Sakai, the new soccer coach.
Huh ?!
Where on earth have you been all this time?!
Is it true you didn't go to camp?!
Don't tell anyone...

BAM
You open this door!!
BAM
Wait just a minute!
Natsuru !!
If I tell anyone,
will Rio get arrested?
But if I keep quiet,
does that make me an accomplice?


with her skinny arms
Rio buried him
all by herself...


See you later.
...
Summer vacation was over.
You didn't forget anything?
You've got lots of stuff on your first day back.
Yeah...

Hey, it's been a while!
You're all tan!
Aww, crap! Lemme copy your homework.
Please have your sketch assignments out on your desk.
I'll come around and collect them to put up!
RUSTLE

Princess! Your hair is so pretty!
Heh heh
Mama curls it for me every morning.
If I even talk about cutting it short, Daddy gets mad...
He says it's much prettier long.
Oh my gosh, look...
Suzumura must be cutting her own hair.
Is it just me, or is it dirtier?
Snicker

Suzumura ...
Her dad still hasn't come home...
...
Are you all right?
Your hair's all messy.
Would you like to borrow my brush?
And your clothes...
Your mother won't buy you new ones...?

...
It's not your fault that your parents don't take care of you.
I think it's just awful when kids have to suffer.
If you need help, talk to me, okay?
you've been abandoned.
...
It almost looks like
SLAP

...
You don't know anything about it...
so shut the hell up!!

Natsuru hit a girl!!
GASP
はっ
Oh no, your nose is bleeding !!
Take her to the nurse's office!

DRIP
ポタ
I'm so,
so sorry!

All right, you two...
PIT-A-PAT
はら はら
I am so terribly sorry!
...
What a way to start the semester...
Can't believe I was called in... It's like a soap opera...
...

Something's been wrong with you since summer vacation!
You won't get away with staying quiet forever!
Natsuru!!
What happened? What happened?!
It's *never* okay to hit a girl, no matter what the reason! You know that!
No matter...
the reason...

But even if you know it's wrong,
what if that's the only thing you can do?
What then?!
What was I supposed to do?!
What else could I...
...
Natsuru!!

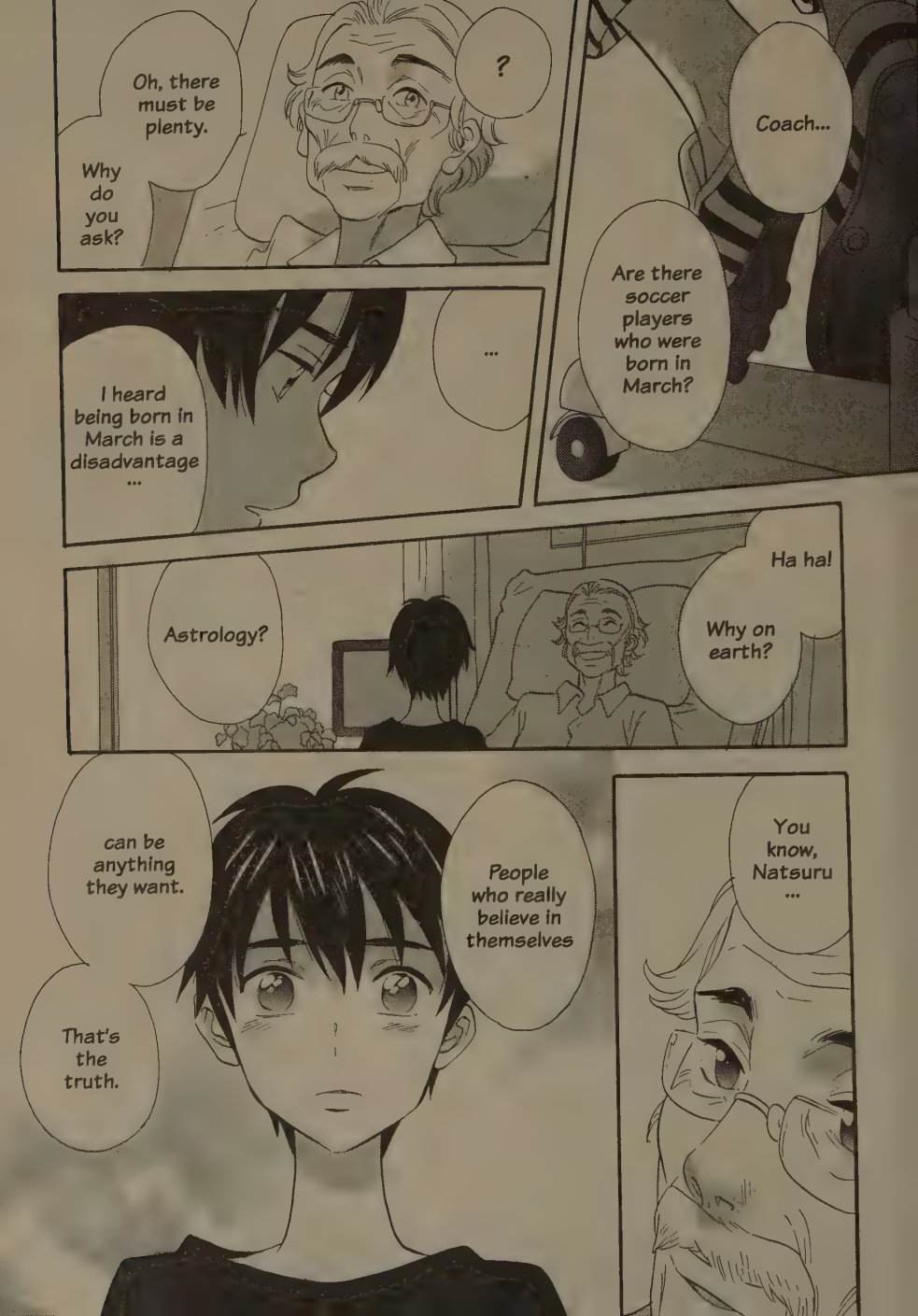
ZAWA HOSPITAL

final chapter

Nurse Station

In pajamas he just looks like someone's grandpa...
zzz
Coach Okada...
...
KREAK
Wha?
Natsuru ?!
Hi...

How are you doing, Coach?
Oh, I'm all right.
I had surgery, and I'm fine now.
You came all this way just to see me?
Sorry I had to quit so suddenly.
You must've been worried.
How is everyone?
The team practicing hard?
...
Yeah.
Uhm...

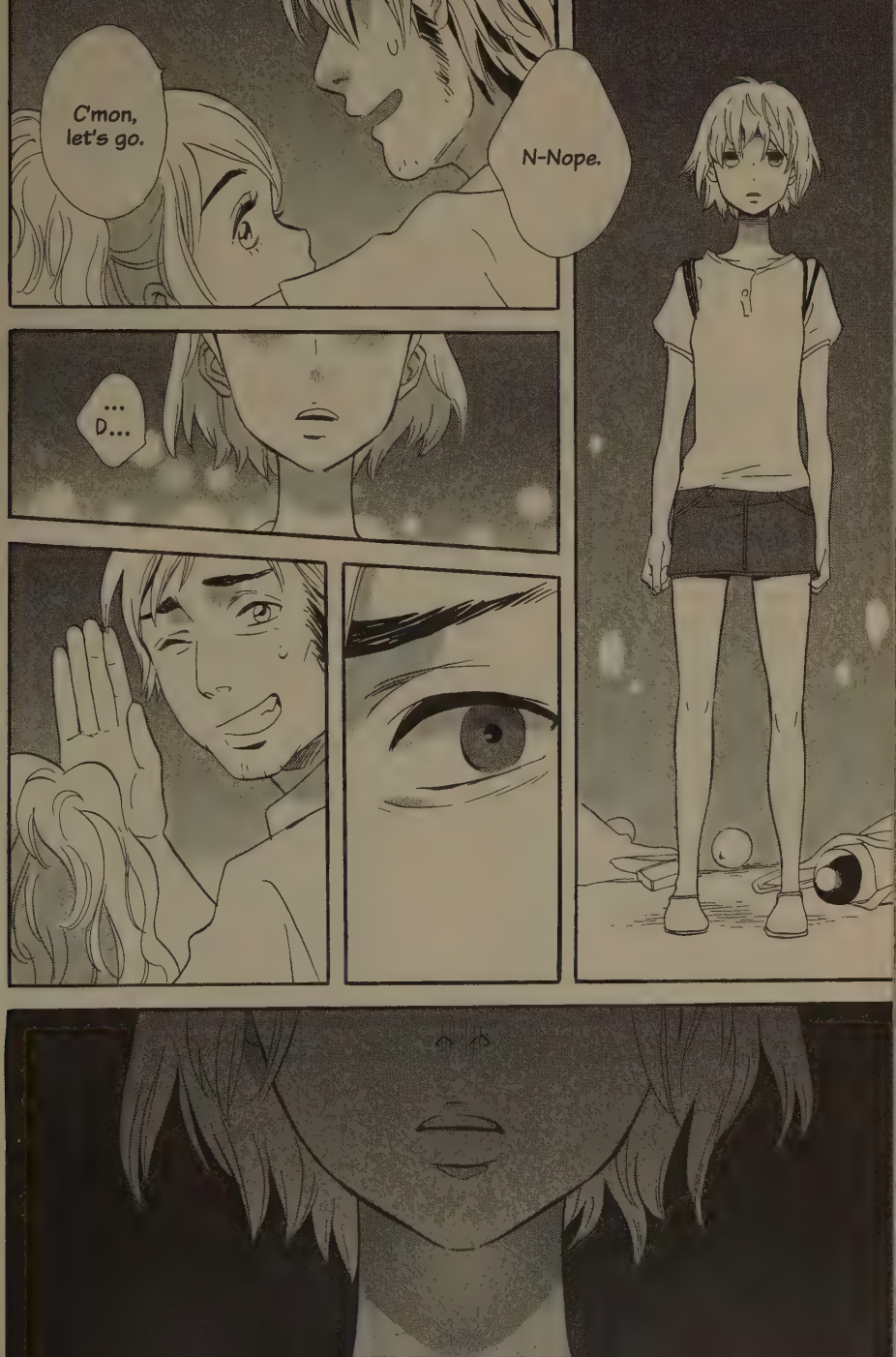

Coach...
Are there soccer players who were born in March?
?
Oh, there must be plenty.
Why do you ask?
...
I heard being born in March is a disadvantage ...
Ha ha!
Why on earth?
Astrology?
You know, Natsuru ...
People who really believe in themselves
can be anything they want.
That's the truth.

Let's play soccer again sometime.
Natsuru ...
COACHING SOCCER
for kids!

Natsuru's acting so strange...
What do I do...?
Sweet-heart...
What do I do...
I just can't figure this out on my own...
Darling...

Can I help carry anything?
HUFF
HUFF
No way! ♡

WHUD
...
Where's the crab?
...
How was Alaska ...?
...
Huh?
Do you know that kid?


C'mon, let's go.
N-Nope.
... D...

I'm hungry...
Sis...
...
Is Nat-Nat gonna come play with me...?

Not Dad,
or Natsuru.
They're never coming again.
...
No, he won't.
THUMP

テン BOUNCE
テン.. BOUNCE
B...
Bwaaah!
Waaah!
Waaah!
Waaah...

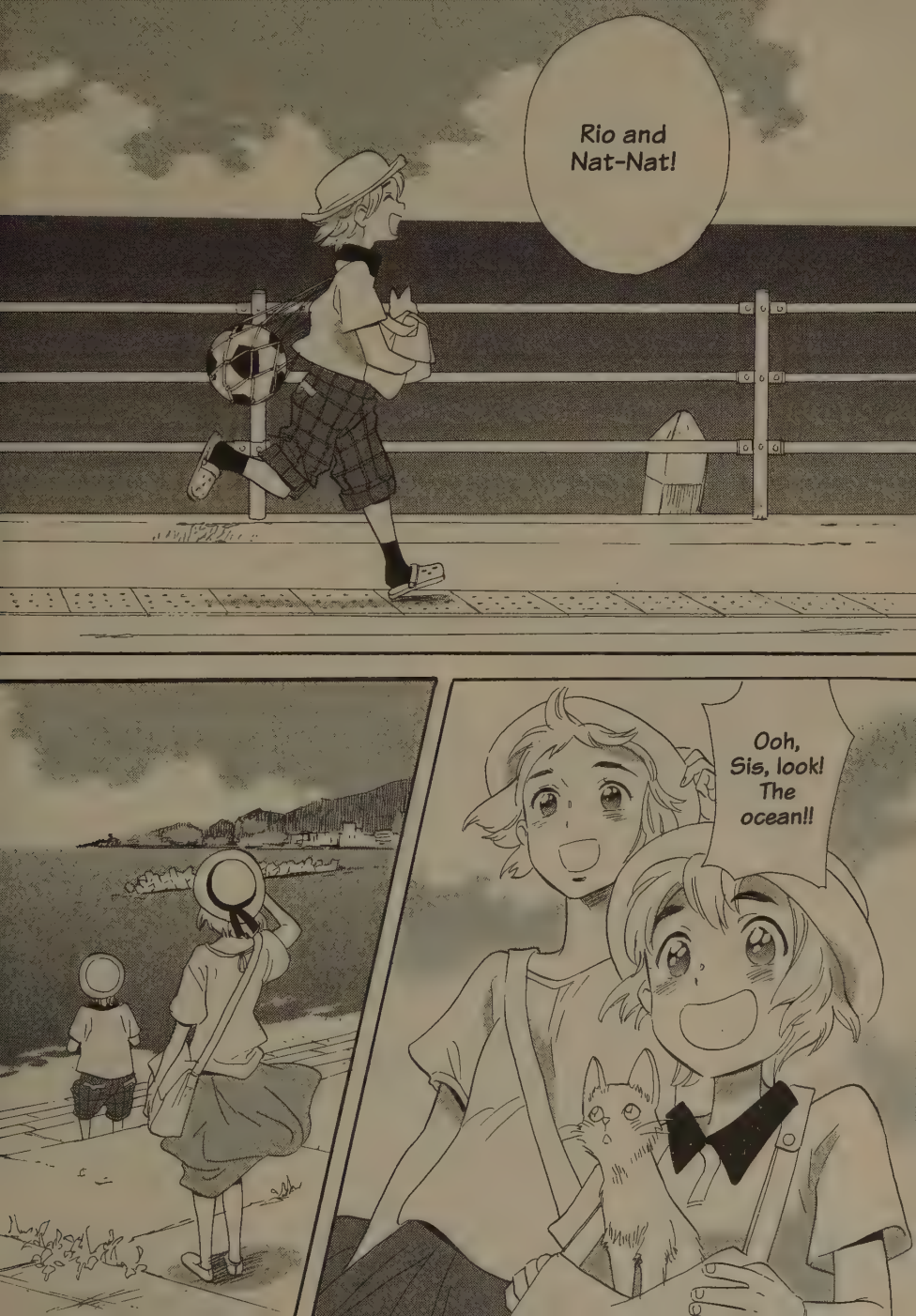
Rio.

Let's run away together.

We didn't buy a ticket for you.
MEOW
KTUN
タタン
I took all my savings,
and we left town on the first train.
No, Tofu! Stay in there.
KTUN
タタン
MEOW
All I can see are mountains...
KTUN
ガタン
ゴー
RUMBLE
Wow, the view...
...
I should've buried him somewhere like that...
KTUN
タタン...
KTUN
ガタン
ゴー
RUMBLE

I wonder what's out there in those mountains ...
Maybe there are animals nobody's ever seen
that get to live their whole lives in the quiet, without ever meeting anyone...
We didn't know where we were going.
KTUN
AAN!
Clothes-pin.
Note-book.
K... k... ka...
KA-BOOM!
Hushu
AAN!
KTUN
But nobody asked.

I don't wanna play word-chain any more...
Let's do riddles.
Riddles ...
Okay...
They shine brighter in the dark...
but even when you can't see them, they're still there.
What are they?
Hmm...


Rio and Nat-Nat!
Ooh, Sis, look! The ocean!!

What's that? A jungle gym?!
They're tetra-pods.

Petra tote!
Totra
P...
poh!
Ha ha ha!
Tepra tops!
Tetra-pods.
Tetra-pops!
What are you gonna do when you grow up, Nat-Nat?
Wha... me?
I'll just be a normal soccer player, I guess.
Normal ...?
When I grow up I'm gonna swim across the ocean!!
Daddy said when I grow up I can do anything.

Hey, the next summer Olympics
are gonna be in Rio.
The Rio Olympics!
I wonder if I can make it in time...
The Japan Olympic team?! That's normal?
What do you wanna be, Rio?
I just want
to be a
normal bride...

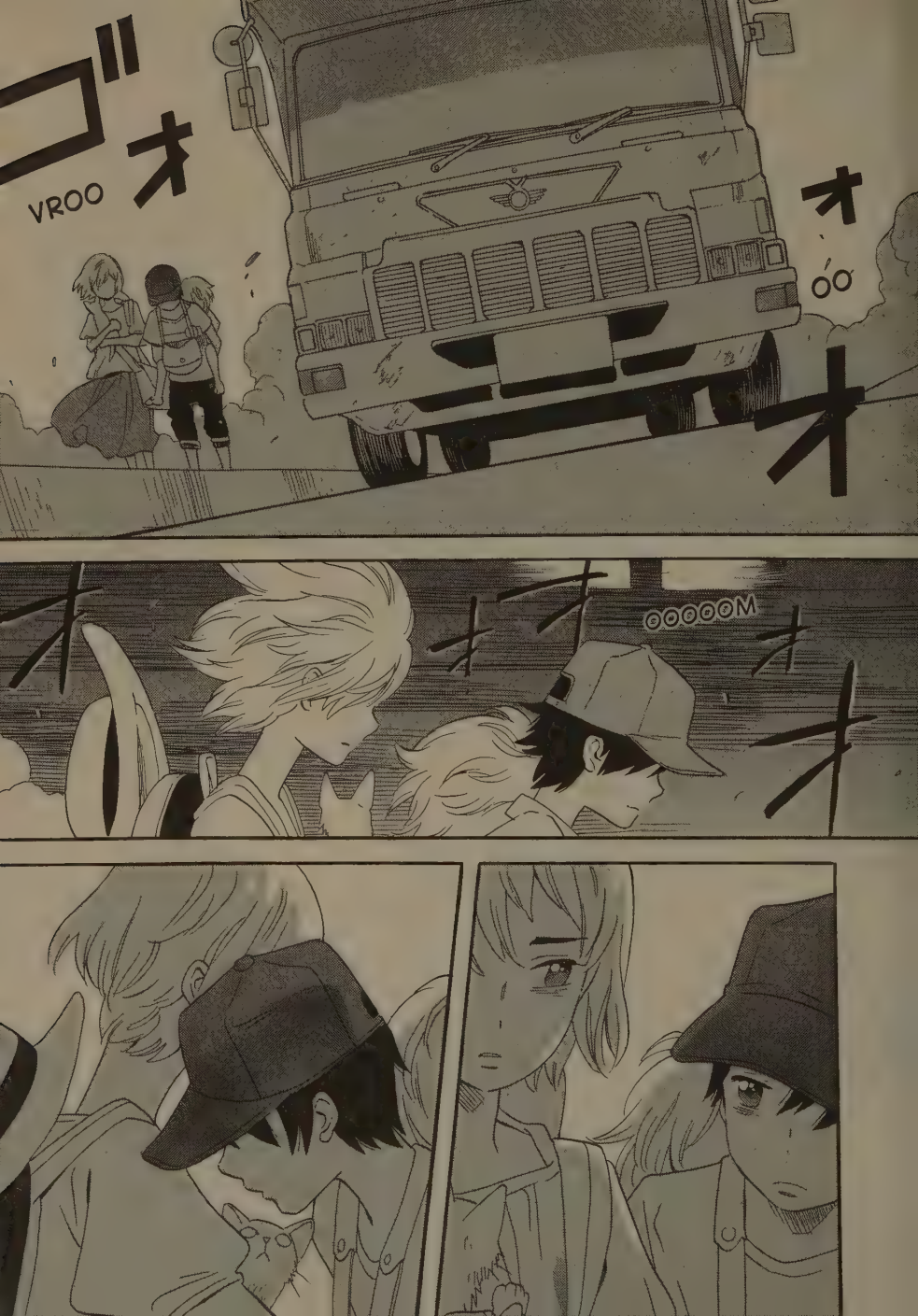
Yuuta...
...
Huh?
Whose?
Uhm...
Uh, that was...
told me that you said I'm cool...
Aww...
You just meant my helmet ...?
back when they had the bike safety class...
...
No. You are cool.
You were the only one who had a cool helmet...
That's all...
But you had an old lady bike.

When you run,
Because you're so fast.
Whenever we play soccer in gym class, nobody can keep up with you.
I can hear the wind,
and it's like the whole field sways.

Natsuru...
When you grow up,
you might be taller than me.
すと TMP
Like this, maybe.

Ah!
She was so cute
Yuuta's swim-ming!
HEE
HEE
that it hurt.

I've never been this far away
from home without Mom before.
Is he too heavy?
Want to switch?
I'm fine.


ゴオ
VROO
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ÓO
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オオ
OOOOOM
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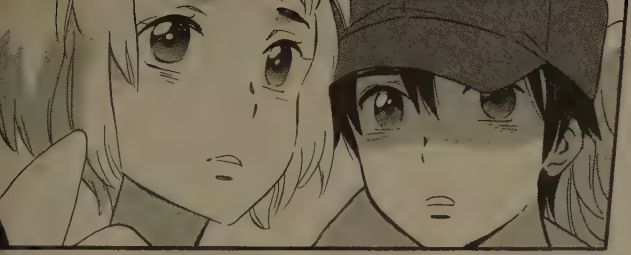
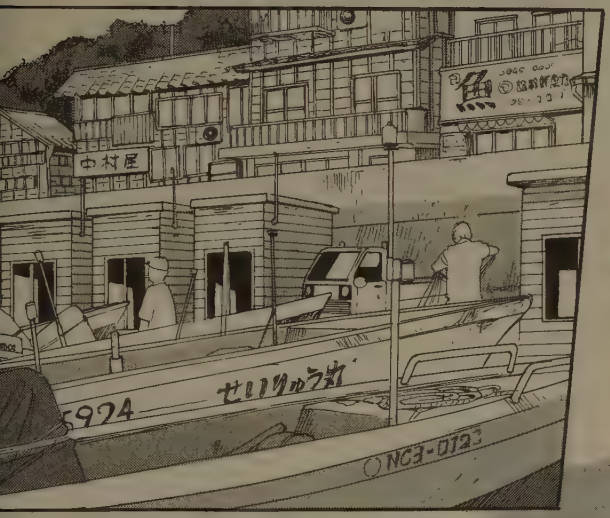
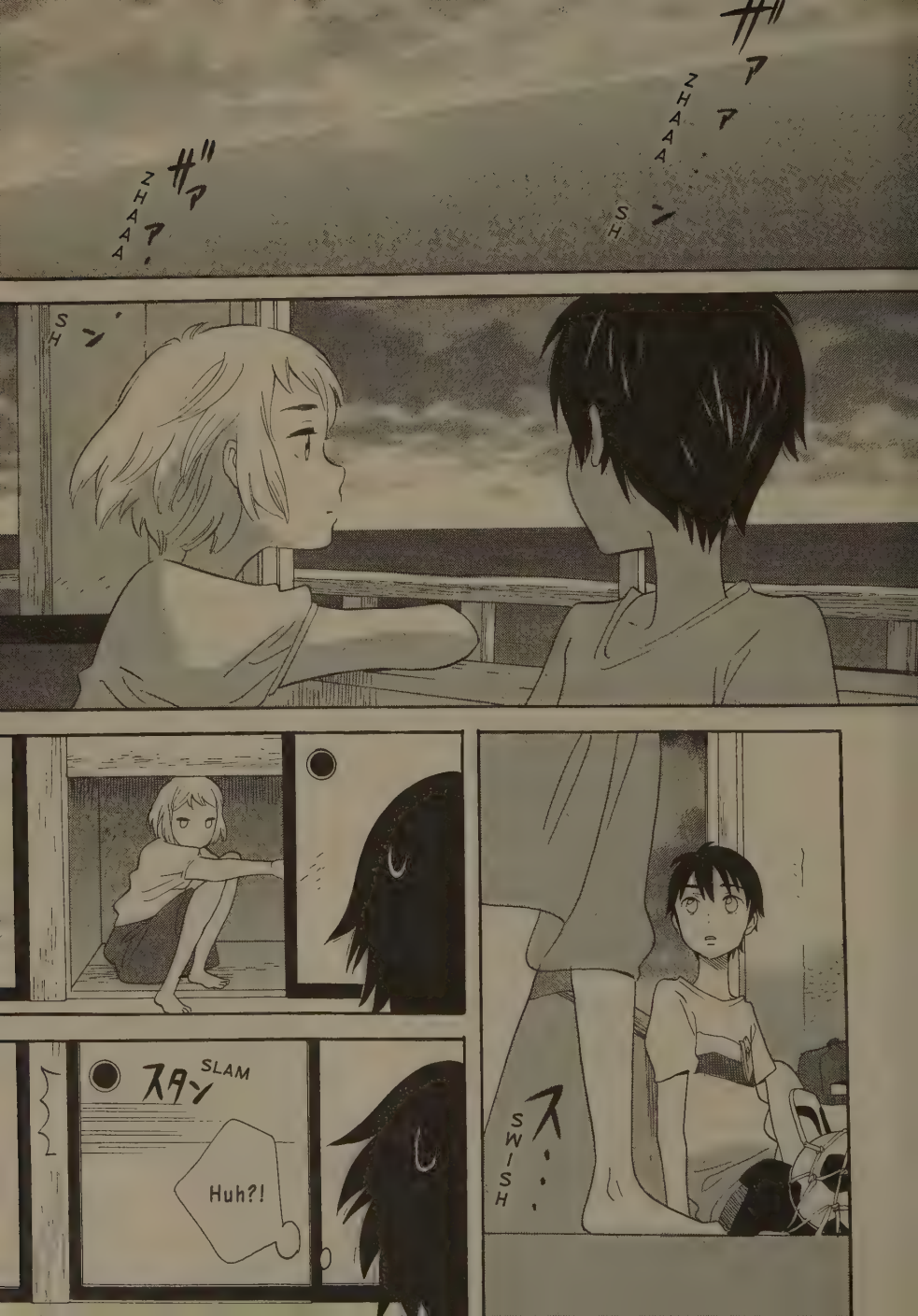



中村屋
魚
NC3-012

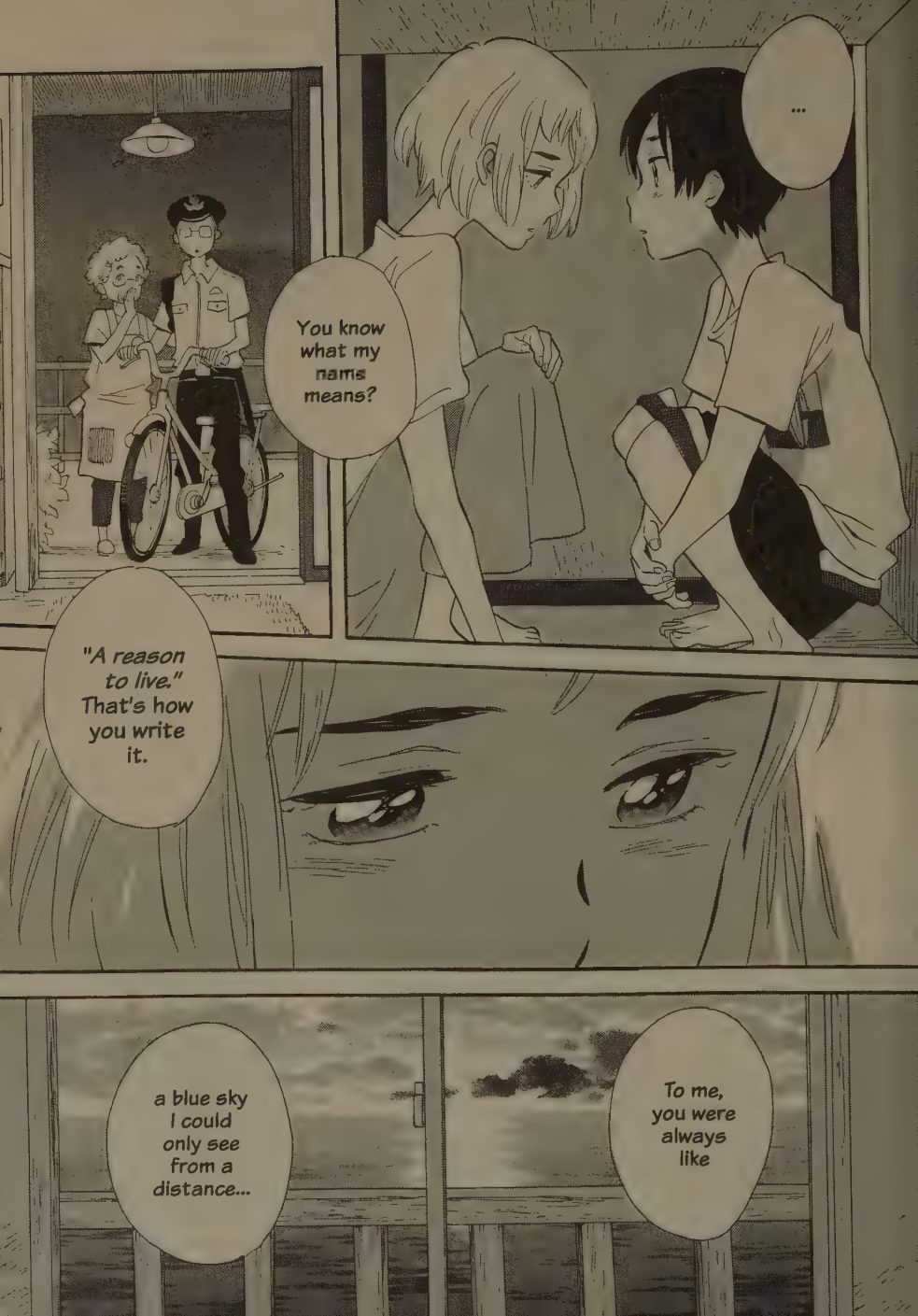
FISHING LODGE
HAMANOYA

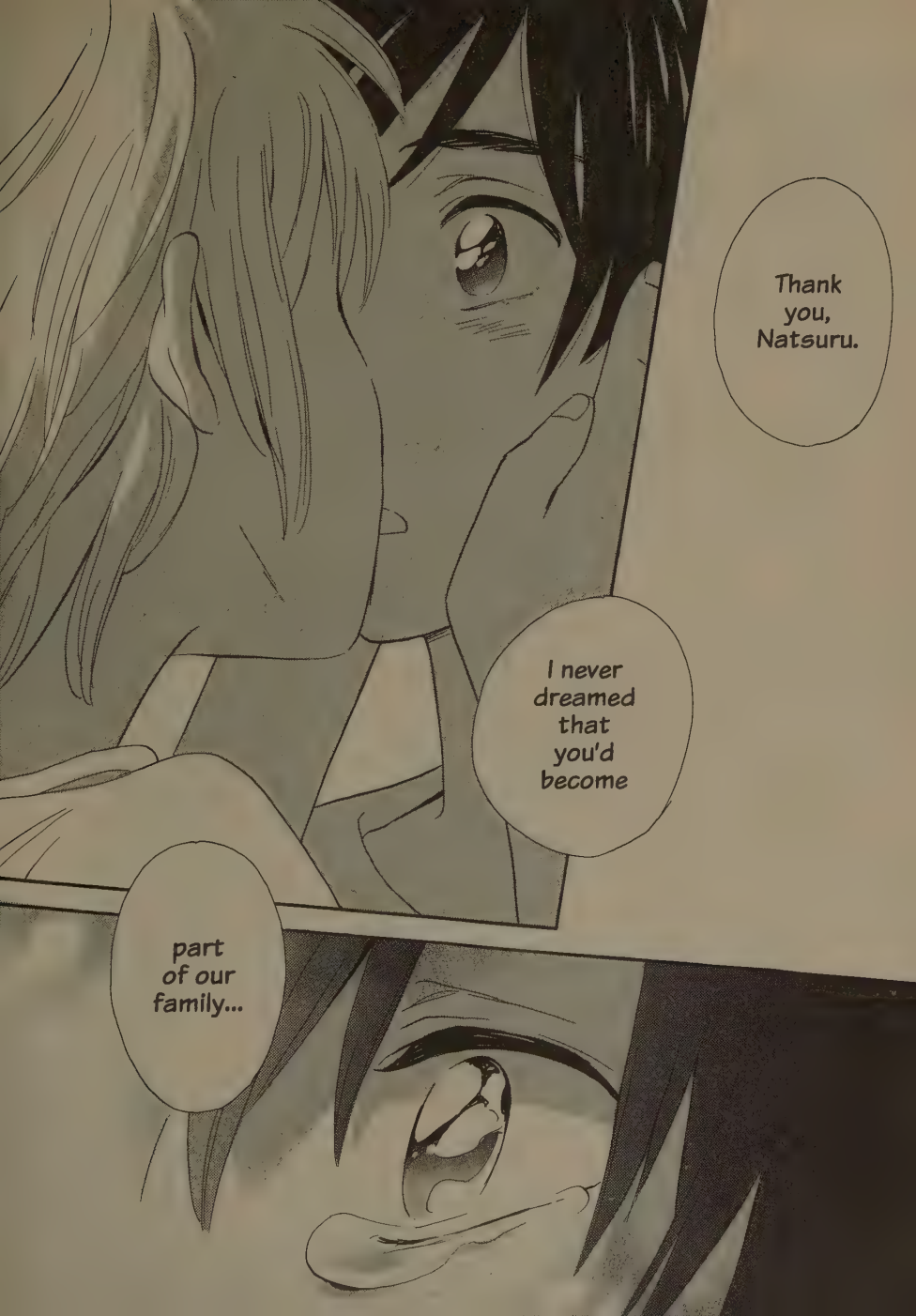
This is an inn, right?
Can we stay tonight?
E- Excuse me...
it's jellyfish season. You can't go swimming, OK?
...
Yes, but...
...
Where are your folks?
Summer vacation's over, isn't it?
Are you kids here by yourselves?

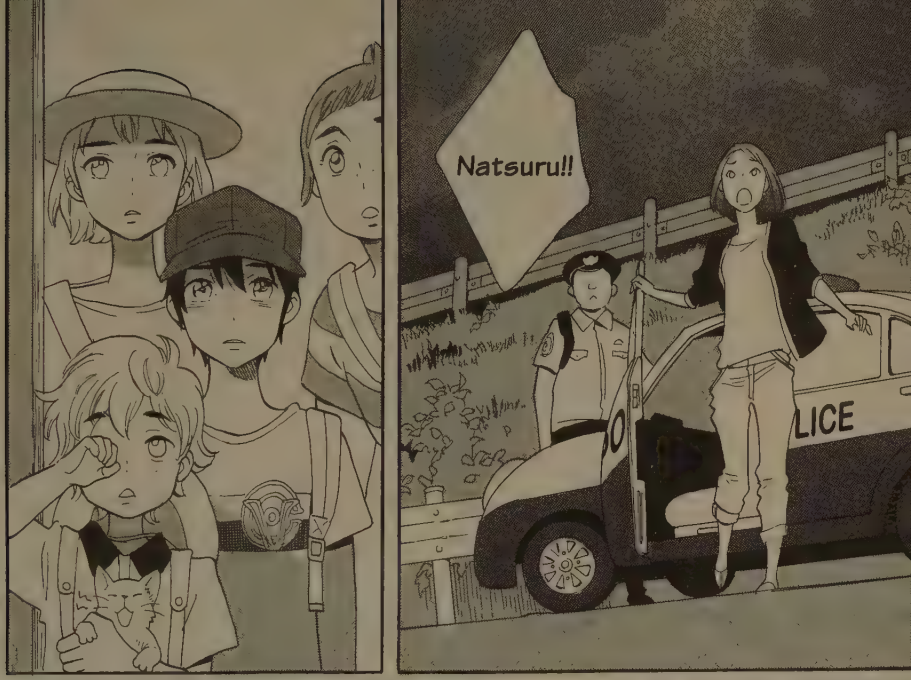
Aww, Mom, it's all right.
Oh, a little cat, too!
So cute!
We've got a room with an ocean view.
And I can scrape something together for dinner.


ザアアア
ZHAAA
シン
SH
ザアア
ZHAAA
シン
SH
スッ
SWISH
スタン
SLAM
Huh?!

Wh...
What?
COME HERE
ちょい
ちょい
Natsuru...


...
You know what my name means?
"A reason to live." That's how you write it.
To me, you were always like
a blue sky I could only see from a distance...


Thank you, Natsuru.
I never dreamed that you'd become
part of our family...


Natsuru!!
LICE

That night
my mom arrived in a police car to get us.

Ooh, the real thing?!
Go right ahead.
Can we ride in it?!
LICE
7"
D
D
VROOM
This one's for you, ma'am.
CLOSE
タンッ

Hang on!
TAP
コンコン
TAP
I'm sorry you couldn't stay...
but eat this.
Oh, thank you.
ゴォ
VROOM
オオオオ
...
Natsuru.

Were you
protecting her all this time?
Uh...
...
Waaaah!
Waaaah!

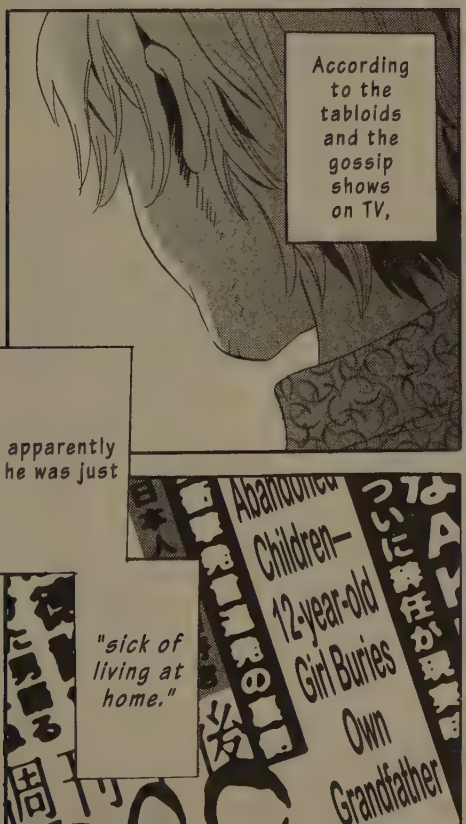
...
Rits...
When Dad was sick,
in the hospital, he told me...
"If you're a good boy, and listen to your mother,"
"the gods will see,
and I'll get better."
"So wait for me and be good, okay?"

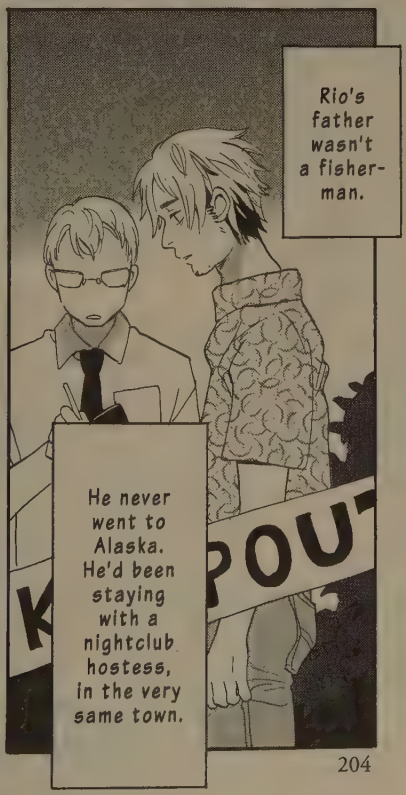
So I must not have been good enough.
But he died...
Why?
...
Some-times
even the gods lie to us.

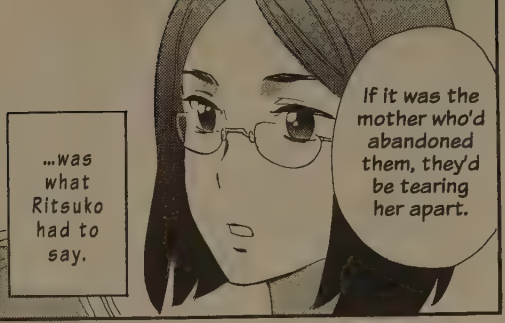
It's because...
they love you very much.
The gods lie.
They lie because it's the best they can do.
Rits...
I wasn't all that sad when Dad died.
Maybe because I was so little.

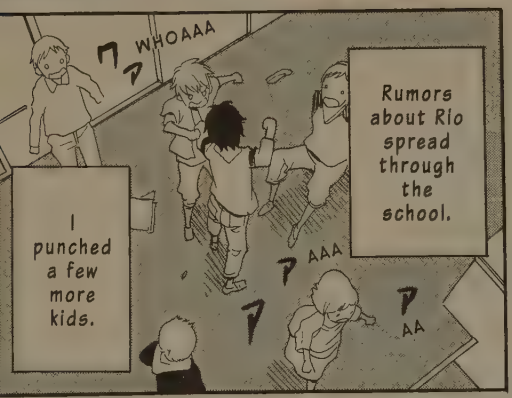
...I know.
So I'm okay now.
We reach out for their lies
and we keep on living.

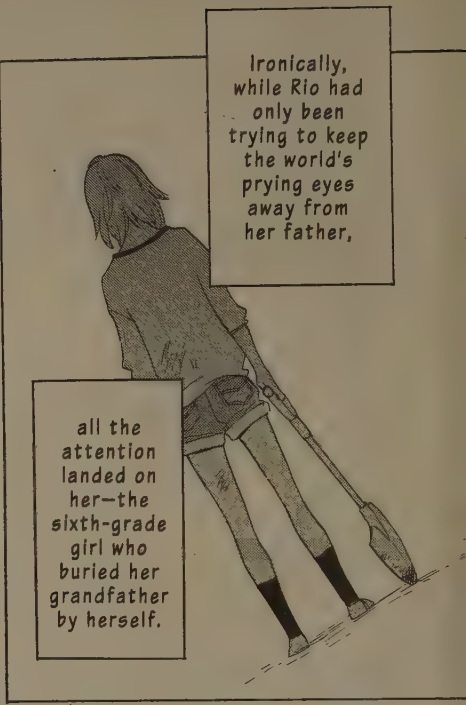
The next day,
after Rio told the police what had happened, they searched the garden
and found her grandfather's remains.

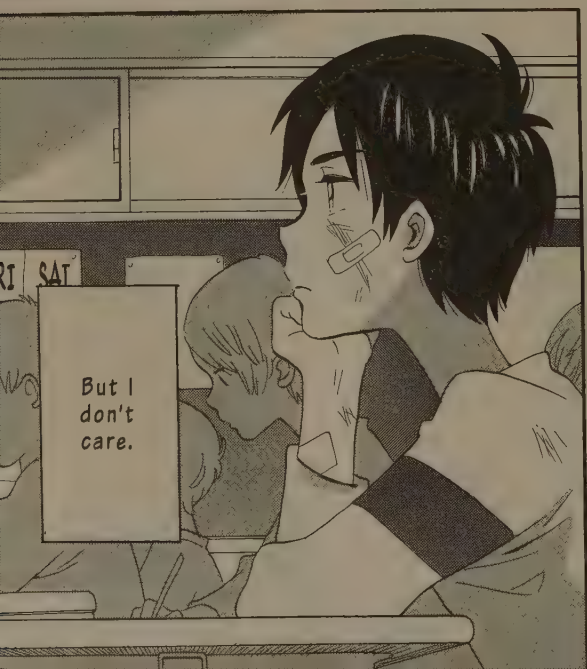

According to the tabloids and the gossip shows on TV,
apparently he was just
"sick of living at home."
Abandoned Children—12-year-old Girl Buries Own Grandfather

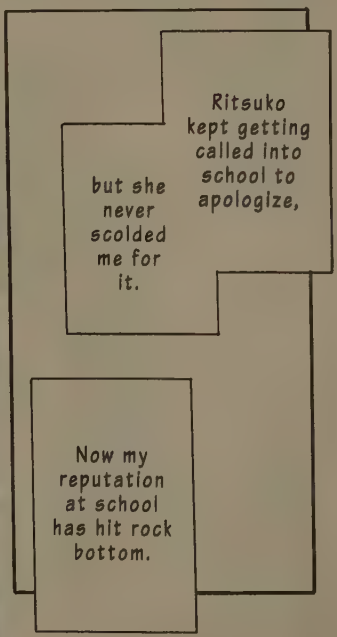

Rio's father wasn't a fisherman.
He never went to Alaska. He'd been staying with a nightclub hostess, in the very same town.

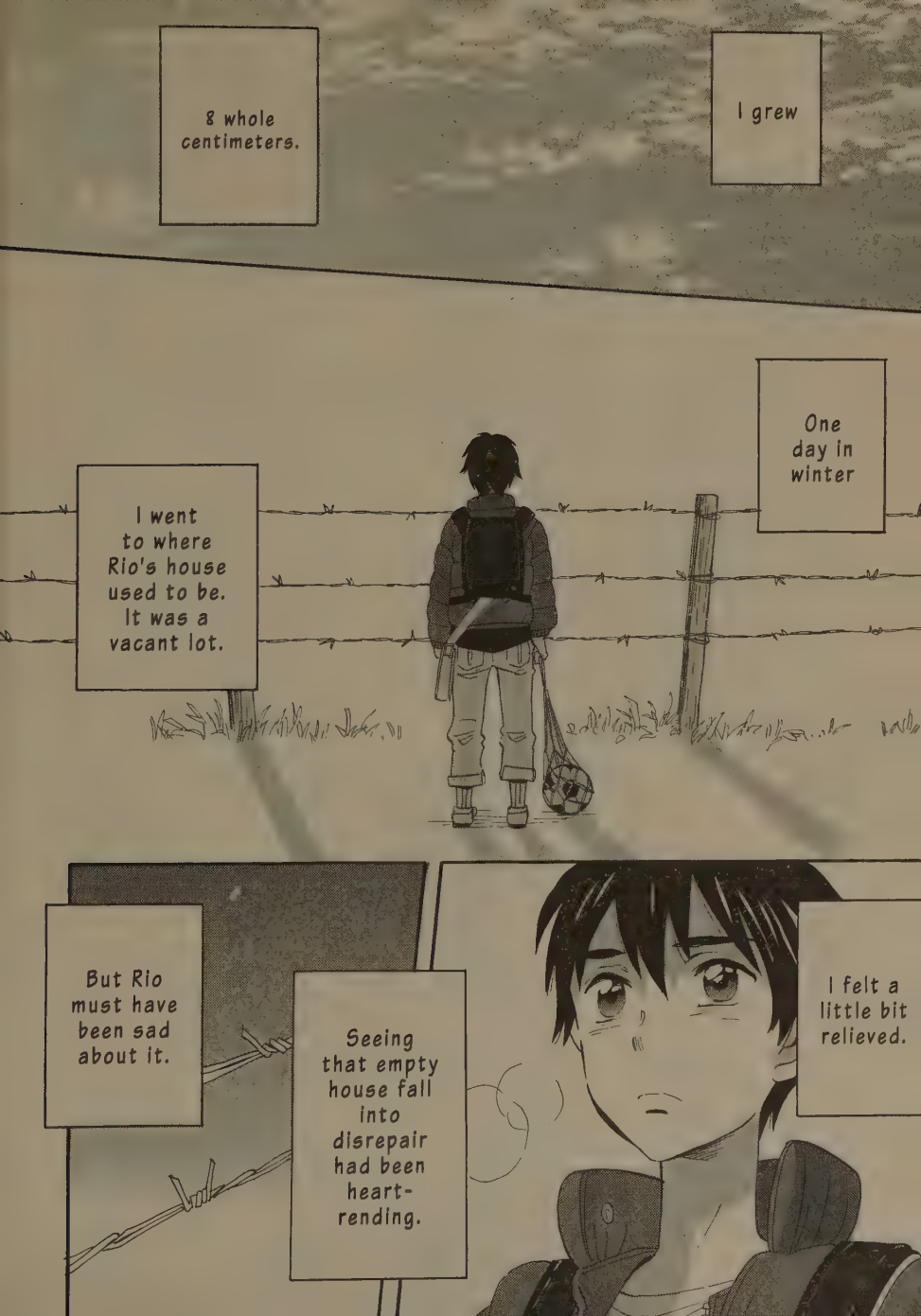

If it was the mother who'd abandoned them, they'd be tearing her apart.
...was what Ritsuko had to say.

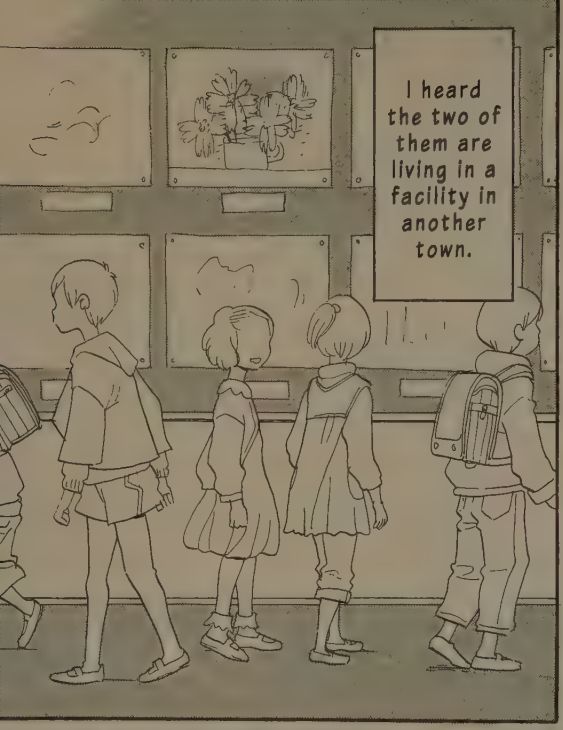

WHOAAA
AAA
AA
Rumors about Rio spread through the school.
I punched a few more kids.

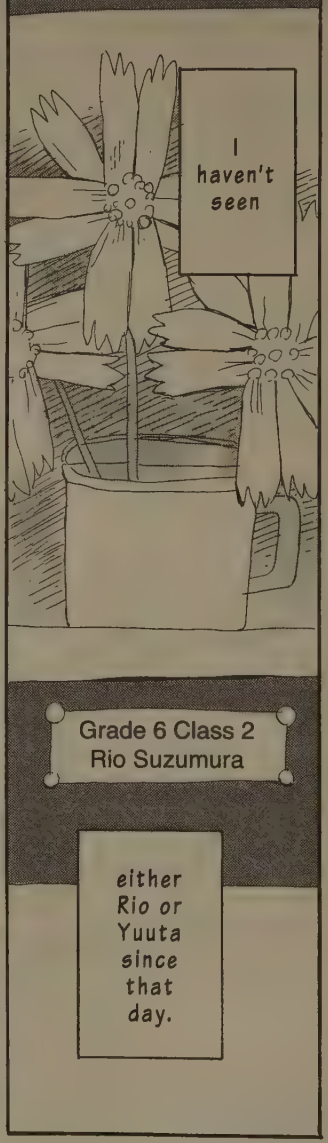

Ironically, while Rio had only been trying to keep the world's prying eyes away from her father,
all the attention landed on her—the sixth-grade girl who buried her grandfather by herself.

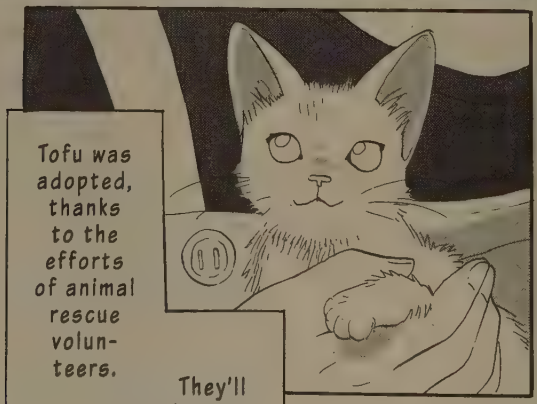

But I don't care.


Ritsuko kept getting called into school to apologize,
but she never scolded me for it.
Now my reputation at school has hit rock bottom.


8 whole centimeters.
I grew
One day in winter
I went to where Rio's house used to be. It was a vacant lot.
But Rio must have been sad about it.
Seeing that empty house fall into disrepair had been heart-rending.
I felt a little bit relieved.


I heard the two of them are living in a facility in another town.

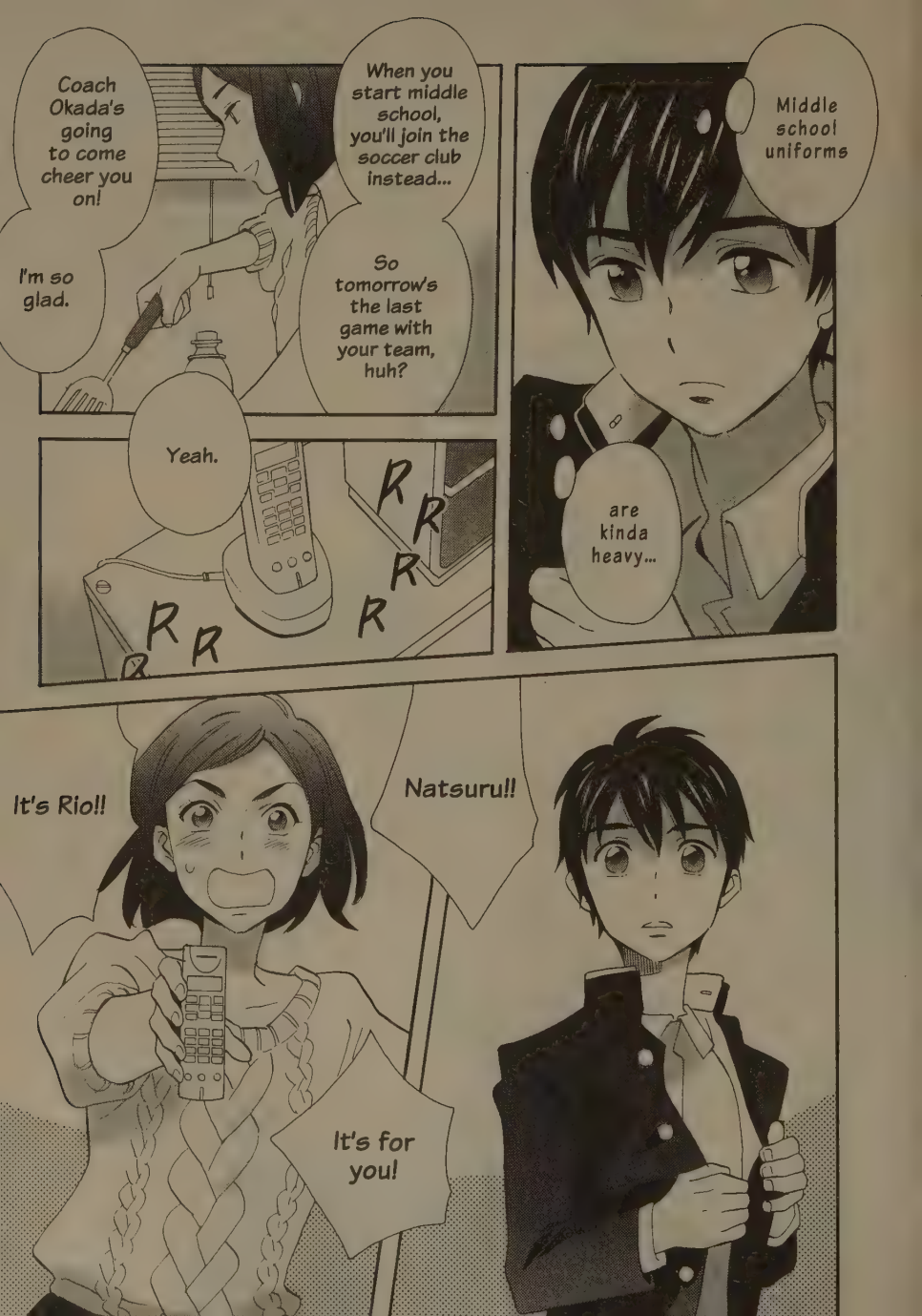

I haven't seen
Grade 6 Class 2
Rio Suzumura
either Rio or Yuuta since that day.


Tofu was adopted, thanks to the efforts of animal rescue volun-teers.
They'll have to remove her paralyzed foot.

A cat with one missing foot...
But she learned to run with three feet.
There's nothing sad about that.
Go!
Go!

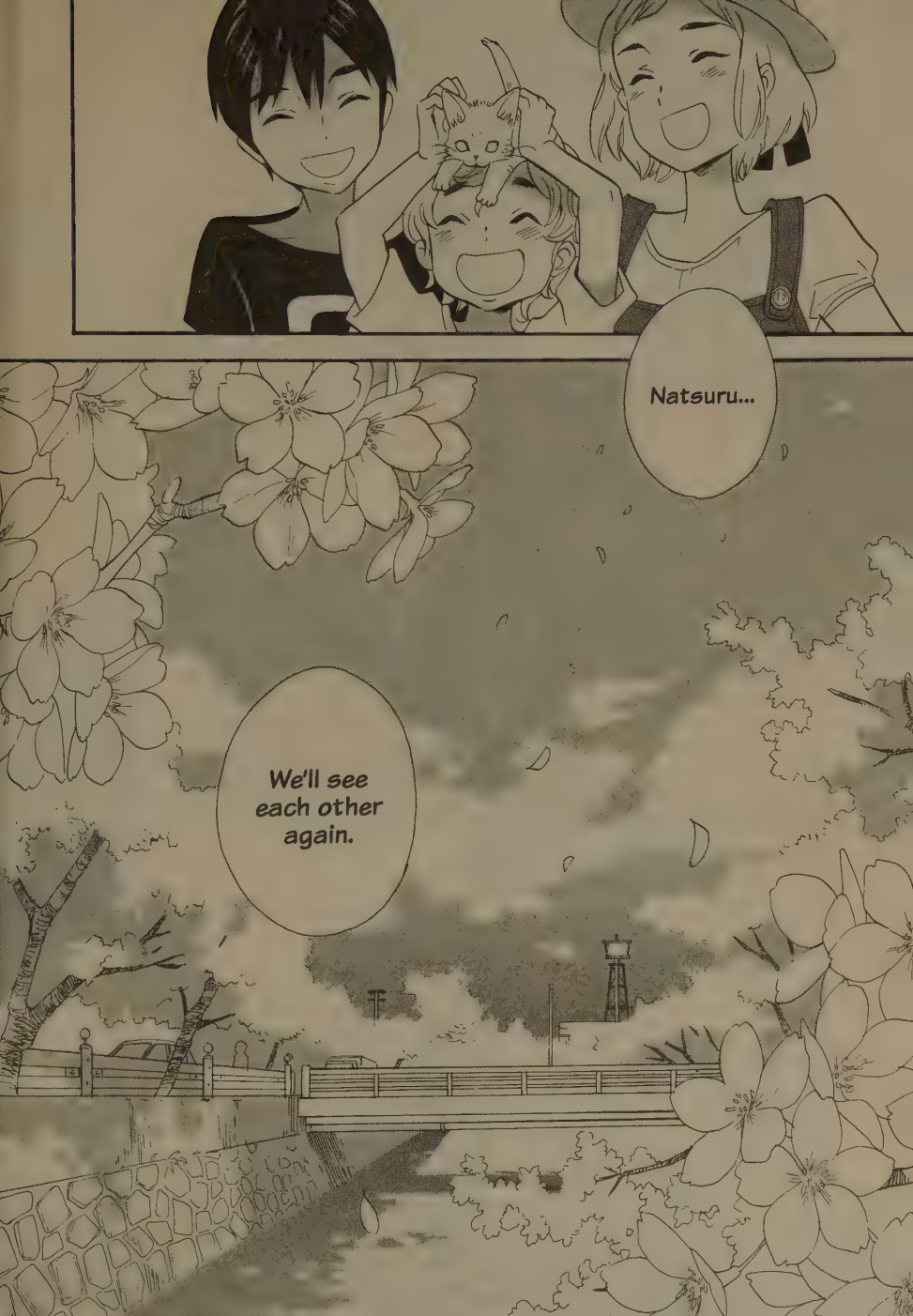
NANAO
9

Umm...
I guess it'll work for a while.
How's it fit?
You probably grew again since you were fitted, didn't you.


Coach Okada's going to come cheer you on!
I'm so glad.
When you start middle school, you'll join the soccer club instead...
So tomorrow's the last game with your team, huh?
Yeah.
R R R R R R
Middle school uniforms
are kinda heavy...
It's Rio!!
Natsuru!!
It's for you!

...
Natsuru?
H...
Hello?
Sorry.
My voice changed...
You sound different...
...
Natsuru,
I...
Why are you apologizing?

I dreamed
that you were a soccer star.
I have this feeling
it'll really come true.


Natsuru...
We'll see each other again.

END

the gods lie.

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Natsuru Nanao, a 6th grader who lives alone with his mother, strikes up an unlikely friendship with the reserved and driven Rio Suzumura. Natsuru plays hookey from soccer camp that summer, and instead of telling the truth to his mother, he spends all his time with Rio and her kid brother at their rickety house, where a dark secret threatens to upend their fragile happiness.

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